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# **POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF RABINDRANATH**

**BY  
SOCHIN SEN, M.A., B.L.**

**WITH A FOREWORD BY  
PRAMATHA CHAUDHURI,  
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**ASHER & CO.  
36, SIMLA STREET, CALCUTTA.  
1929**

**Rs. 2-8.**

Published by  
Messrs. ASHER & CO.  
36, Simla Street, Calcutta.

*First Published in September, 1929.*

Printed by  
S. C. DHAR at the SULEKHA PRESS  
28, Baitakkhana Rd., Calcutta.

*To*  
*My Cousin*

**Manindra Nath Sen**



## **FOREWORD.**

The word, ‘politics,’ has acquired in the course of ages quite a definite sense in all the European languages and signifies a particular kind of social activity which has for its object the tinkering with legislation, or reforming the constitution of a country. And since the advent of ~~democracy~~, politics has ceased to mean statecraft, because new ideas of the relation of the ruler and the ruled have taken possession of people’s minds, and these ideas, when clearly formulated, attain the character of general principles and are called ideals in the modern world. And those who formulate and systematise those new ideas about the relationship of the state and the people are known as political theoreticians.

Rabindranath is not and has never been either a practical or a theoretical politician.

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Although a poet, he has not built for India a new Utopia, neither has he furnished the politicians with a clamourous programme. He is too conscious of the realities of the present day world to indulge in constructing the future of India with shadows, or to induce his countrymen to follow an easy path of progress. He knows that a nation's politics cannot be seriously considered apart from its national life and mentality.

But if we take politics in its human and not in its professional sense, Rabindranath has been undoubtedly the greatest political force of modern Bengal. His intense love for his country and his people and his deep appreciation of and sympathy with its ancient civilization, breathes through almost every line of his writings : more than anybody else has he stirred a feeling of love and reverence for their own country in the minds of the present generation of Bengalee. Rabindranath is not a Bengalee Keats, that is to say, his mind is not closed to the dust and storm of life. His mind has ever been in living and intimate touch with the present. And his prose writings show that there has

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been no new movement of thought or action in India, which has not deeply touched his mind, and about which he has not had to say something profoundly illuminating. He has never failed to protest in burning words against the wrongs done to our people, neither has he failed to criticise our people when he felt that their unthinking activities were doomed to futility. He is one of the greatest satirists in literature, and his satires, no less than his poems, are inspired by the same deep love for his country.

Ideas and thoughts of Rabindranath which have a bearing on politics, are scattered through all his voluminous works. And no body to my knowledge has hitherto attempted to gather and weave them together, so that people might have an adequate knowledge and true understanding of his political views. Srijut Sachin Sen is the first Bengalee, who has carefully studied the Poet's writings with a view to bring out this aspect of his mind. He has arranged these political ideas under different heads and thereby placed before the reading public Rabindranath's political opinions in a concise and sys-

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matic form. A glance through the pages of this book will enable the reader to grasp Rabindranath's ideas with regard to the people, the State, their mutual relationship, nationalism and internationalism—questions in which we are all interested. It goes without saying that the Poet's words do not always reflect so-called public opinion, but they make people think and feel deeply. His words as a rule overstep the bounds of practical politics, and attain the heights of poetic beauty and philosophical truth.

Mayfair,  
Ballygunje.

Pramatha Chaudhuri.  
12-9-29.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In presenting this book to the public, I make no apology as none is needed. My justification is that this is a pioneer work in the field. Rabindranath is a versatile genius. But the world knows him best as a poet and his literary contributions come next in order of public appreciation. That he has a distinctive political philosophy of his own is little known and less understood. I have sought to present the same in a clear and condensed form and I hope that it will serve to interest the reader as such.

Our political leaders are at present wallowing in the welter of misunderstanding, and I am sure Rabindranath can help them a good deal. The present age demands clear thinking, sane vision and sober imagination. And a study of Rabindranath's philosophy will clear the mist that beclouds the minds of politicians.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I have utilised many writings of Rabindranath in Bengali magazines and books which have never been published in English. It might be noted in this connection that many of his important utterances in politics are to be found in his Bengali works. I have translated those passages very clearly and faithfully. Those translated passages have not been specifically mentioned in the book. This omission is accidental, not deliberate.

I forbear writing more in the preface as neither the subject nor the Poet requires further introduction.

The reader will notice that the foreword hereof has kindly been written by Mr. Pramatha Choudhury M. A. (Cantab), Bar-at-law. As an undoubted authority on Rabindranath, he has taken a very keen interest in the publication of this book. I cannot adequately express my gratitude to him.

My gratitude to my friend Mr. U. N. Sen is considerable. He kindly revised the MSS. and his help and suggestions were invaluable to me, failing which the book would not have seen the light of day.

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Among other friends whose co-operation I received in the publication of the book, the names of Messrs. Abinash Ghosal, Bhupati Sen and Satyen Sen deserve special mention.

I must also thank my publisher Messrs. Asher and Co. whose interest and service I value much.

A word of apology : typographical errors are to be found in the book in spite of great care.

CALCUTTA,  
*12th September, 1929.*

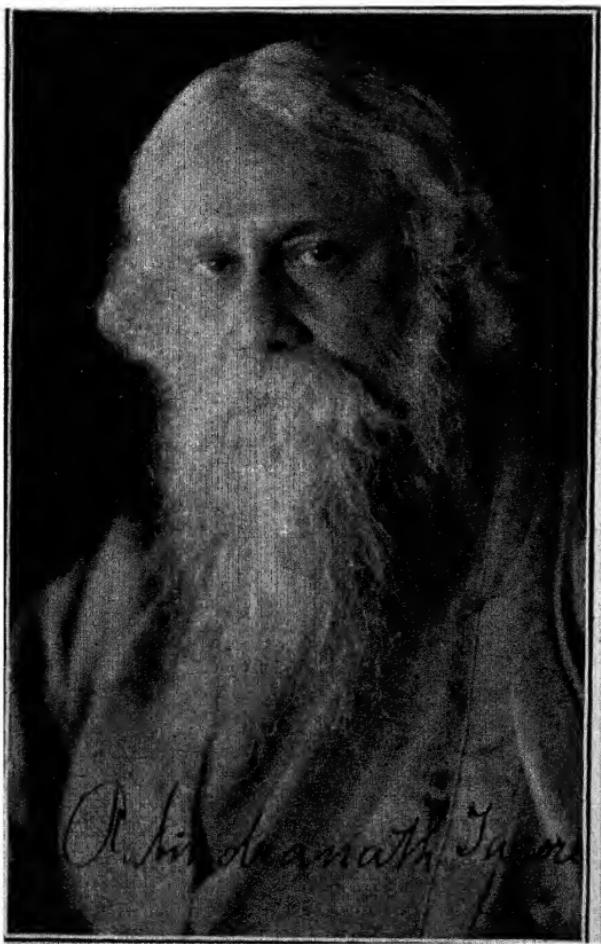
Sochin Sen.



**POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF  
RABINDRANATH**







Sri Aurobindo

# **POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF RABINDRANATH**

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## **CHAPTER I.**

### **INTERPRETATION OF THE EAST AND WEST.**

**S**MART and superficially critical, worshippers of self, shrewd bargainers in the market of profit and power, efficient in their handling of the ephemeral, who presumed to buy human souls with their money and threw them into their dustbins when they had been sucked dry and who, eventually driven by suicidal forces of passion, set their neighbours' houses on fire and were themselves enveloped by the flame”—these are the words in which the great poet and profound thinker, Rabindranath, has

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described life in the West without any risk whatsoever of contradiction.

Life in the West has vitality in excess. Ever since the dawn of contact between the East and the West, thinkers, travellers and propagandists from the latter have discussed the former and they have all erred, specially about *India*: some on account of blissful ignorance of Indian culture and tradition, while for others we can trace misrepresentation to the superficial study of India's men and manners. They merely studied the surface but did not probe into the heart of Aryabarta. But life in India flows underneath unsoiled by external crudities and things are not what they seem. It is, therefore, a matter of small wonder that confused misunderstanding and misrepresentation are the characteristic features of all that is written or said about India by Westerners. The Europeans misunderstand us because they do not find, or finding they do not, utilize opportunities of knowing India as she is as distinguished from as she appears. The resulting attitude is one of supreme contempt which can be summed up in the following words applied to the natives of South

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**Africa**: "They are black from head to foot and their nose is so flattened that it is impossible to pity them."

### **Our contribution.**

This misunderstanding is still further aggravated by our worthy youngmen who have seen life abroad. They return to the homeland saturated with admiration for Western gloss and materialistic grandeur and ridicule India's inertia with a vehemence which is unequalled by our foreign critics. They are, as the Poet says, "hypnotised by the cruel laughter of the senile civilization of the West that scorches all green beauty into grey barren-ness." Disdainful of ourselves we bring ignominy to the whole nation and the world laughs in derision.

### **The Poet's interpretation.**

When two nations of distinctive cultures, customs and traditions meet, the resulting issue should be a fusion by mutual understanding, each taking in and absorbing the good of the other. But in India understanding has been in the melting-pot and the Poet, viewing with

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alarm this conflict of cultures, has given us an interpretation of the East and the West which is the first serious attempt at understanding. Rabindranath has known India intimately and studied Europe intensively and from one land to the other he has been carrying on the "kindly light that leads." He is unruffled by the impetuous onrush of Western civilization and unperturbed by the superficial inertia of India and it will be interesting to see where he leads us to.

### **India social and Europe political.**

India is simple : Europe is complex. India is pre-eminently social and Europe predominantly political. In Europe, the strikes, lock-outs and other conflicts are domestic discords which do not affect national solidarity. Every nation has internal unity in matters relating to other nations and so their domestic affairs do not affect their position as a nation of the world. Besides, Europe is a land of insufficient resources and the grim struggle for existence rendered it indispensable for the nations to obtain resources from abroad. That is why

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Europe has been aggressive and adventurous for many centuries. The history of Europe is practically a history of continual warfare between belligerent nations either at home or abroad. We have known 100 Years' War, we have known one nation dispossessing another of her rightful colonies and all these struggles emanated from the simple philosophy of "One must live." Nations in Europe could not and to this day they cannot remain shut up within their geographical limits except at the risk of death by starvation.<sup>1</sup> Thus through struggles for existence and protection of commercial interests, they have become politically supreme. Prince Von Bulow of Germany anticipated the World War in view of the fact that "the German Empire has not enough accommodation for her children and colonies outside the Empire must be established to secure maintenance and prosperity of her surplus population." Verily, Europe is "might

1. "Man's history is being shaped according to the difficulties it encounters"—Rabindranath.

"It is the soil and the climate that primarily mould a race"—Prof Leo Probenious.

"History of a nation is cast in the arms of nature"

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beheading right" and the late WAR is an evidence in support of the Poet's indictment, "Driven by suicidal forces of passion, they set their neighbours' houses on fire and were themselves enveloped by the flame." Nations vied with each other in rapacity and greed and political considerations completely foreclosed development of morality in man so that in course of several centuries, Europe's contribution to higher civilization is the flapper vote and short skirt.

### **India different.**

While European nations were thus engaged in establishing, and consolidating political and commercial interests outside the continent and fighting among themselves for political supremacy within the continent, India remained a bystander enshrouded in her own glory and indifferent to questions of political expediency, she even conceded trade facilities to Europe which ultimately resulted in the annexation of India under the British Crown. Always plentiful in her own resources and with a broadness of view emanating

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from higher conceptions of life and fellow-feeling, India distinguished herself by providing accommodation for all that came her way—travellers, traders and even invaders found a happy home in Hindusthan without suffering the invidious distinction of caste, creed or race. Believing in the comity of nations, India had no antipathy against the foreigner and as such she altogether dispensed with extermination of races which was the very bane of political life in the West. Stripped of foreign policy and aggression on other people's lands, India devoted herself to social adjustment of races ethnologically different<sup>1</sup> and divergent in culture and civilization and to this extent she executed her self-imposed duty in a manner which was the acme of perfection. Notwithstanding political fusion, the Englishman's gibe at the Scotchman has not exhausted itself but in India racial egotism never asserted itself. Different races have lived in amity or amiable isolation in which there was no scope for conflict. Every group was allowed

1. Risley classified Indian races into seven physical types  
(1) Turko-Iranian (2) Indo-Iranian (3) Scytho-Dravadian (4) Aryo-Dravadian (5) Monglo-Dravadian (6) Mongolid (7) Dravadian.

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to develop in its own distinctive way. This accounts for an explanation of the strangeness of the phenomenon how Great Britain governs India with a handful of civilians and an army of 76,000 Europeans and 1,59,000 Indian troops. India's mission is really that of a hostess.<sup>1</sup>

1. Referring to the problems of Aryan colonisers in the land of Hindusthan, Rabindranath says :—

"India is the one country where the Aryan colonisers had to make constant social adjustments with peoples who vastly outnumbered them; who were physically and mentally alien to their own race; who were for the most part distinctly inferior to the invaders. Europe on the other hand is one in mind; her dress, custom, culture and with small variation her habits are one."

That India laid much emphasis on social adjustment goes a great way in explaining the peculiarities that distinguish India from other places of the globe. The poet of India has never lost any opportunity of bringing home to us the characteristic features of this country and the poetess of India, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, expressed the same idea when she said :—

To my country came the Greek, the Scythian, the Jew, the Persian, the Caucasian, the Mussalman, he who represents one creed, and he who represents another creed, some came in friendship, some came in enmity; some came in pride and in challenge; but they all came, and there is a saying in my country that those who have tasted of Ganges water become baptized into the Indian race, whatever are their credentials or lack of credentials, whatever be the might and power of culture, of creed, of empire, they represent; or whatever be the depth of poverty, of illiteracy, of ignorance, of oppression in their lands that they represent :—it makes no difference to India. The soil of India became homeland; the "promised land" to the Jew, the land of liberty to the oppressed,

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### Caste System.

India's caste system<sup>1</sup> evolved out of her respect for the vocation and heredity of the different groups and cohesion of the social structure was well established thereby till such time as the overflow of foreign settlements in India. Her solidarity and progress suddenly stopped short at the evolution of the caste system and the indispensable change was not brought about with the process of time. A period of stagnation set in and convulsions in the social structure quickly followed completely disintegra-

the land of peace to the Mohammedan, the land of service to those who truly followed the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount—and they all came and became Indians. They brought with them the hawk nose of the desert, the snub nose of the Mongolian, the white skin of the Nordic people, the black skin of Africa, the brown skin of Central Asia, they brought all lands to yours. But with its wonderful magic India has always said—You may come, You may conquer me, as you have conquered me, but me, you have never taken captive, for it has been my fashion always to conquer my conquerors”.

1. “Indian civilisation is the blossom and fruit of the caste-system”—Bluntschli.

“I believe the caste-system to be in many respects the chief d'oevr, the happiest effort of human legislation. I am persuaded that it is simply and solely due to the distribution of the people into castes that India did not lapse into a state of barbarism and that she preserved and perfected the arts and

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ting the home races which was the beginning of the decadence of India. "What India failed to realise", says the Poet, "was that in human beings, differences are not like physical barriers of mountains fixed for ever---they are fluid with life's flow, they are changing their shapes and volume.....India laid all her emphasis upon the law of heredity ignoring the law of mutation and thus generally reduced arts into crafts and genius into skill." Thus it was that the caste system which was once a blessing became an unmixed evil through rigidity of observance.

But the history of Europe is different. The nations have developed through friction and conflict. There is the "anti-Asiatic legis-

sciences of civilisation while most other nations remained in a state of barbarism"—*Abbe Dubois*.

But for the caste system the traditional artistic culture which gives the present generation of Indians such a splendid foundation to build upon, would long ago have disappeared entirely.

—*E. B. Havell.*

"What is Varnashram, you would ask. It is not religion, it is not beauty, it is not conscience, it is none of these single and separate things but it is the essential recognition of the human duty, of each man to his brother, in all aspects of life."

—*Mrs. Naidu.*

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lation" "springing from the lower passions of greed and hatred" the like of which was never attempted in India. India's handling of problems which arose from time to time did not lack the dignity of grace. The higher instinct of love always guided India and even her worst enemies cannot dispute the fact that at any stage of her evolution, India did not blunder into a display of aggressive brute-force which marked the activities of Europe. The clash between Protestantism and Catholicism was the greatest mockery of Christianity as showing an unhealthy state of mind—an open sore as it were that had to be healed up by co-religionists fighting each other. In India we had a serious clash between Hinduism and Buddhism which was made up by love and understanding and not by hatred and fight and herein lies the glory of India by special contrast with the religious fanaticism of the West. Man killed man for no other noble end than asserting his own private faith on the co-religionist. Christ, perchance, was in heaven but everything was wrong with those who professed Christianity and no wonder it is that Madame Halide Edib,

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exponent of New Turkey, says "I know many Christian persons but no Christian nation."

While Europe was intolerant of diverse views, India attempted unification. The history of India, if interpreted aright, shows unmistakably that she always tried, and often successfully, to converge divergent views and thereby to attain the O N E in many. Without destroying differences without, India wanted ultimate unity within. Rabindranath voiced this ancient truth of India in Gora : "I would like you to appreciate that Hinduism like Mother has accommodated different peoples of diverse views. It is Hinduism alone which has recognized man as a man, not as one belonging to a group. The Christians do not recognize variety. They say that Christianity is on one side and on the other side is eternal destruction. We have received our moral lessons from those Christians, so we are ashamed of variety in Hinduism. We do not know that Hinduism has attempted to find the one in many and we won't be able to know Hinduism truly, if we do not free our mind from the thraldom of Christian education."

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As between India and Europe there is a fundamental difference in tradition and outlook on life.<sup>1</sup> To the Westerners, civilization is to be judged by the material prosperity which a nation has attained. But to Indians, civilization is a measure of its moral progress towards attainment of Godhood. Indians believed in material progress only in so far as it was only necessary for plain and peaceful living consistent with high thinking. As the Poet interprets, India's civilization is a "civilization of the forest." Under all circumstances and through the flowing stream of time one can always attain truth and self-realisation but in solitude and intensive meditation far away from the din and bustle of worldly life, one can find treasure and thus it was that India's numerous hermitages grew up and

1. Analysing India and Europe, Rabindranath finds :—India looks to unity, Europe to friction. To establish relationship with others is the aim of India but to breed conflict is the genius of Europe. Indian society makes room for all, whereas Europe protects society by ousting others. India is alone in work but shares with others in enjoyment while Europe is organised in work but alone in enjoyment. India respects man, Europe respects work. India wants freedom for others, Europe wants freedom for himself. India's interest is to reach the goal, Europe finds interest in the chase. India's religion is comprehensive and intensive but Europe's religion is in the church.

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developed in the forest. The problem that faced India was not effective invasion of the neighbour's territory or planning of a beautiful city but to realise God in real life. India was not enamoured of the amenities of life but seriously concerned to rise above all sufferings, privations and deprivations which were indissolubly linked up with life. While Europe turned to explore the world, Indian philosopher turned to explore the mind and their numerous works on philosophy bear testimony to the standard of perfection they attained in this direction. While all the architecture and monuments of ancient India have crumbled down to pieces, Indian philosophy still persists and inspires us on to noble living.<sup>1</sup>

1. Rabindranath in appreciation of that attitude of mind proclaims :—

“Oh Mother India ! Thou hast taught your kings to forsake the land and throne and take to mendicancy.

Thou hast taught the brave to forgive the enemies in the battle.

Thou hast taught the worker to dedicate every action and its reward at the feet of Brahma and the familyman to extend his home to the neighbours, relatives, guests and orphans.

Thou hast taught your sons to keep enjoyment under control and to idealise poverty.

Thou hast taught also how to celebrate good days by auspicious rites and how to keep yourself always before Brahma in sorrow and happiness in scorn of self interest.”

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The West is under the illusion that India lives in fancy past ; "It is like a rich mausoleum which displays all its magnificence in trying to immortalize the dead", that is what the Westerners think but in point of fact our past was not immobile. "We forgot that in Asia, great kingdoms were founded ; phi-

This is the keynote of the Indian philosophy, which has never asked people to cultivate a sense of physical comfort.

They prized not wealth, not power, not glory, not the man whose sword flashed in the sun in the tumult of battle. The final criterion of the standard of human worth was knowledge not wealth, sacrifice not accumulation, beauty not ugliness, giving and not taking, seeking rather than the end of the search. These were the things that kept the spirit of man alive and related him to God.

So Rabindranath says :—

I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography not because I had the chance to be born in her soil but because she has saved through tumultuous age the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great sons—Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma—Brahma is Truth, Erahma is Wisdom, Brahma is Infinite : Santam, Sivam, Advaitam, peace is in Brahma, Goodness is in Brahma and the unity of all beings."

Aurobindo Ghose echoed the same thing when he said :—

"The idea by which the illumination of Asia has been governed is the firm knowledge that truth of the spirit is the sole truth, the belief that the psychological life of man is an instrument for attaining to the truth of the spirit and that its laws must be known and practised with that aim paramount and the attempt to form the external life of man and the institution of society into a suitable mould for the great endeavour"

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losophy, arts, science and literature flourished and all the great religions of the world had their cradles. For centuries we did hold up torches of civilization in the East when the West slumbered in darkness and that could never be the sign of sluggish mind or narrowness of vision." Our metaphysics is not everything. "We also have lived for centuries, we still live and we have our aspiration for a reality that has no end to realisation." We are not inheritors of a passive spiritual civilization. "We had business, wars, travels in foreign lands, exchange of culture, relations with foreigners etc. From a study of the Mahabharata, we could gather that we did not spend our time in contemplation only."<sup>1</sup>

In this connection and with special reference to the Poet's interpretation of ancient India, it would be interesting to note the extent of

1. Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar in his "Futurism of Young Asia" proves that Asia is not inferior to Europe, epoch by epoch, in the preindustrial period. In his "Positive Background of Hindu Sociology" and "Political Institutions and Theories of Hindus" Professor Sarkar establishes fundamental identities in ideology and institutional life between the West and the East. In his "Hindu Achievements in Exact Sciences", Professor Sarkar gives an interesting account, perusal of which is highly profitable.

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misrepresentation indulged in by Western Orientalists :—<sup>1</sup>

*Hegel (1770-1831)* :—In the orient, the internal law and moral sense are not yet distinguished ; so also do religion and the state.

*Michelet (1798-1874)* :—In India, man is utterly overpowered by nature, like a feeble child on its mother's breast, alternately spoiled and beaten and intoxicated rather than nourished by a milk too strong and stimulating for it.

*Cousin (1792-1867)* :—In the East, everything is more or less immobile, industry feeble, the arts gigantic and monstrous, law of the state fixed and immutable, religion a longing after absorption in the invisible and philosophy the contemplation of absolute unity.

*Buckle (1821-1862)* :—“The tendency of the surrounding phenomena was in India to inspire fear. In India, man was intimidated.”

*Maine (1822-1888)* :—All oriental communities have been despotisms.

1. The views gathered from Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar's “Studies in Philosophies”.

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*Janet* :—The orient in general and India in particular never realised the idea of the state.

*Max Muller* :—He expatiates on quietism, pacifism etc., as the exclusive and dominant characteristics of India. He harps on climatic influences on race character. Secular virtues, materialistic joys and economic enterprise are considered by him to be the monopoly of the Europeans and he manages to discover the exact opposite among the Hindus.

*Flint* :—The idea of progress is unknown in the orient. The idea of humanity is undeveloped in Indian thought except in Buddhism.

*Sylvain Levi* :—“The white race must, to speak in the manner of Kipling, accept the burden in a virile manner.”

Professor Benoy Sarkar says that these orientalists in Europe are nothing but ardent propagandists on behalf of the colonialism and imperialism of the white races.<sup>1</sup>

1. For specimens of the venomous writings of the British imperialists, Dr. Sunderland's articles might be read. Mention of Miss Katherin Mayo, the blackest liar of the lot is useless.

**India : no nation.**

According to Rabindranath, “Nationalism is the training of a whole people for a narrow ideal” and proceeding from this abstract theory, he calls India a land of *no nation*. “Here is India of about fifty centuries at least, who tried to live peacefully and think deeply, the Indians devoid of all politics, the Indians of no nations, whose ambition has been to know the world as of soul, to live here every moment of her life in the meek spirit of adoration, in the great consciousness of an eternal and personal relationship with it. It was upon this remote portion of humanity, childlike in its manners, with the wisdom of the old, that the nations of the West burst in.”

**What is a nation ?**

The question that arises now is : what is a nation ? The cult of the nation is professionalism of the people. “Professionalism is the region where men specialise their knowledge and organize their power, mercilessly elbowing each other in their struggle to come to the front.” In India the professions were confined within

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hereditary limits of groups by social regulation. Constant urge of competition did not distract men to diverse professions. But in the West man is, per force, driven to professionalism. Every individual has to take to a profession after his own liking as distinguished from hereditary professions in India and as such "survival of the fittest" has become the cult of the West. Acquisition of power and position is the one end to which all means, noble and ignoble, are good enough and it is this unbridled passion for worldly power that has made the West utterly depraved in moral and spiritual outlook on life. "When the callous rudeness of power runs amuck in the broadway of humanity, it scares away by its grossness the ideals which we have cherished with the martyrdom of centuries."

In the sense in which the Poet understands "nation", India is a land of no nation.<sup>1</sup> But he admits that nationalism "which stands for collective self-interest of a people" is not to be condemned subject to certain limitations. He is shocked by what is seen in practice in Europe

1. "Nations do not create, they merely produce and destroy"—  
Rabindranath.

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where the very ideal of nationhood is the greatest danger to humanity. When national interests are set above the people's, it attacks the vitals of humanity. In the Poet's opinion, Western nationalism as being of "gigantic vanity and selfishness, is only a passing phase in civilization." It did not prosper in ancient India because she always respected humanity. It is thriving in Europe merrily. But signs of discontent and disintegration are already very much on the surface and unless the West straightens out itself and works up a radical change in its outlook on life and morality, the near future will bring disaster. Selfishness is after all a demoralising factor in national and individual life. Rabindranath believes that the basic principle of human life, as preached by the Indian sages, is synthesis and harmony.<sup>1</sup> The Poet does not believe in any doctrine or institution. He has faith in individuals all over the world, "who think clearly, feel nobly and act rightly." But according to him, the only brotherhood which

1. Herbert Spencer says patriotism is a colourless thing, neither to be shunned nor sought after. Romain Rolland believes that the principle of nationality is inherently a wrong principle. "I belong to life as a whole."

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the West allows is the “brotherhood of hooliganism” which idea is also expressed by Wells : “Flags, uniforms, national anthems, patriotism sedulously cultivated in Church and School, the brag, blare and bluster of our competing sovereigns belong to the phase of development we would supercede.”

Although India is “a land of no nation” in abstract theory, there is no bar to forming ourselves into a nation and for all practical purposes we can rightfully claim national status. The Anglo-Indian historians such as Sir John Strachey and Lord Ronaldshay say that nationality cannot prosper in India. Professor Muir<sup>1</sup> adds strength to this dogmatic assertion on the ground of social differences that prevail in India. But India is a national entente, if we accept things as they are. Nationhood, as MacDougall points out, is essentially a psychological conception. Indian nationality has to be understood in the psychological perspective. Ramsay Muir says that a nation is a nation because its members

1. According to Prof. Muir, the following are unities of nationality :—Geographical unity, unity of race, unity of language, unity of religion, common subjection, community of economic interest and common tradition.

passionately and unanimously believe it to be so.

I introduce this discussion willingly so that Rabindranath's point of contention that India is no nation like Europe might not be misunderstood. He has attacked the question absolutely on abstract theory and there he is perfectly right. There is no brag in pursuit of self-interest as Europe is doing. India does not like to play that game. But India is a nation, if we follow the general formulas. Nationality is sure to be helped by common thoughts, common grievances, common rights, common tastes and common sentiments. Moreover, according to Eucken, the past is by no means a finished story. It is always open to the present to discover, to stir up something new in it.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Scientific *vs* Human.**

Rabindranath says that Western civilisation is scientific, whereas Eastern civilisation is

1. Marvin :—“Psychology is everything. Psychology has crowned biology and is exercising a profound influence on philosophy, literature and even politics.”

James Cousin :—The real India hovers over India's head; it is the totality of all that lives in the region of the imagination.

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human. In Europe, people look at everything from the view point of science. But India knows that man is neither a mere physiology, nor biology nor psychology nor even sociology. "Man is infinitely more than natural science of himself." In Europe, machine dominates man. "Western civilisation is carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies, it feeds upon the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future." There is constant rivalry with things, "organised ugliness storms the mind and carries the day by its mass, by its aggressive persistence." India never believed in machinery. Rabindranath says, "We shall thank God that we were made to wait in silence through the night of despair, had to bear the insult of the proud and the stormy man's burden, yet all through it, though our hearts quaked with doubt and fear, never could we blindly believe in the salvation which machinery offered to man but we held fast to our trust in God and the truth of the human soul."

Prof. Sukumar Dutta in his "Problem of Nationality" proves that India is a nation but British rule is based upon a negation of Indian nationality.

Europe's object is to gain, while India's object is to grow. Utilitarian spirit pervades throughout Europe, but affection governs relationship here in India. Europe inflicts hurts, India distributes love. So the Poet remarks:—"The furies of terror which the West has let loose upon God's world came back to threaten herself and goad her into preparations of more and more frightfulness ; this gives her no rest. To the worship of this devil of politics, she sacrifices other countries as victims. She feeds upon their dead flesh and grows fat upon it—so long as the carcasses remain fresh—but they are sure to rot at last and the dead will take their revenge by spreading pollution far and wide and poisoning the vitality of the feeder."

Europe is mad after power. She has forgotten to respect beauty and truth.<sup>1</sup> True, Europe is powerful but not free. India on the other hand always seeks freedom of mind. She is not ready to overpower it by hideous structure

1. Baron Hayashi, an ambassador of Japan in Paris told the French audience:—"As long as we were engaged in peaceful pursuit of arts and literature, we were despised as barbarians but as soon as we (Japanese) learnt the use of arms and the art of killing, we were hailed as civilised and equals of Europeans."

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without. In the West there is huge organisation of slavery, gigantic in structure, monstrous in effect and undignified in its lack of beauty. "They create huge eddies with their passions and they feel dizzily inebriated with the mere velocity of their whirling movement, taking that to be freedom." Europe is burning herself out. She is caught in her own net and is likely to collapse.<sup>1</sup> "But the East with her ideals in whose bosom are stored the ages of sunlight and silence of stars can patiently wait till the West, hurrying after the expedient, loses breath and stops."

The West is hopelessly commercialised, mechanised and materialised as imperialised, militarised and bureaucratised. But the Poet says :—"Our endeavour is to resist the encroachment of the machine upon life's own fruitful

1. Bernardshaw also predicts the fall of the West :—"Humanity is forever changing. History tells us of six or seven civilisations which have gone to ruin. All reached a point of development similar to ours and collapsed because humanity in its political sense destroyed everything. I see no reason why we should not disappear in the same way; all signs point in that direction. Modern humanity is not creation's last word. We have the consolation of knowing that if we succumb, it will only hasten the moment when the life-force will produce something better." This is in tune with Spenglarian Philosophy.

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realm, of organised greed into the sanctuary of human relationship." It must be noted that Rabindranath's revolt is against the man-dominating machine of the West, not against Christian ideals and culture.<sup>1</sup> He intensely appreciates Europe's art, literature etc. He acknowledges where Europe is great. He is not a hater of anything foreign and he bows down before greatness. But he warns India not to imitate Europe. Mere imitation is not productive—rather it is a source of weakness. We should borrow knowledge from others but not temperament and nature. If India be a mere reproduction of Europe, she is destined to meet with extinction. Referring to the case of Japan, Rabindranath says that Japan is old and new. It is no good feeding upon past but positively

1. "Very many people seem to think that I am always talking about the materialism of the West and setting it against the spiritual qualities of my own people. I do not do this and my own people know it. I have known the West and have found there a deep substratum of spiritual thought in your civilisation..... .. My idea is that there is, as it were, a great planet dragging at the minds of the present age, a huge planet with its gravitation, distracting our thoughts and endeavouring towards a path which is not the normal path of mankind".

—Rabindranath.

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harmful to be carried away by the tide of westernism.

Thus we find that the East and the West are different. But still for the sake of humanity, a perfect meeting is necessary.<sup>1</sup> Real union can be had if the heart-chords are touched but in this mad onrush of modern civilisation the real heart-chord has been broken. By artificial process you can stage-manage the whole show but it will be dull and lifeless. Thus the meeting of Europe and India has been as sudden as uncreative. "The wriggling tentacles of a cold-blooded utilitarianism with which the

"To avert a disaster embracing the whole of man, no solution geographically limited to one country can avail, even for that country itself, because of the present-day solidarity of mankind which requires a world-embracing solution. It is my earnest conviction that India is qualified and called upon to provide this solution..... Shall we go on parading our illusory superiority or bring our pride down to the point of accepting the essentials we need so badly ? India possesses an intellectual and artistic elite which would do credit to any nation. The young generation is ardent, earnest, anxious to serve; the custom and ways of living are simple, informal, the race though physically weak is graceful, idealistic, pure-hearted and splendidly-gifted..... Rabindranath works to remove the artificial barriers which on the ground of culture separate the peoples of the world, because they hamper all of them, without helping any, standing in the way of their free and fruitful intercourse."—Prof. T. Fenoit.

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West has grasped all the easily yielding succulent portions of the East are causing pain and indignation throughout the Eastern countries." It is true that the East and the West are not yet showing any sign of real union. The reason is the West has not sent out its humanity to meet the man in the East but only its machine.<sup>1</sup> It is sheer necessity which has brought the West into touch with the East. A spirit of gain and gambling is there. Real union is to be based on love, sympathy and understanding. "The West comes to us not with the imagination and sympathy that create and unite but with a shock of passion—passion for power and wealth. This passion is a mere force which has in it the principle of separation, of conflict." The logic of egotism on the part of the West is standing in the way of perfect meeting. Rabindranath sincerely believes that "the East and the West are ever in search of each other and they must meet not merely in fulness of physical strength but in fulness of truth.

1. Rabindranath believes in spiritual meaning of existence and not in the malignant power of glutinous politics and money-making.

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The right hand which wields the sword has the need of the left, which holds the shield of safety.”<sup>1</sup>

But things are behaving in a drunken way<sup>2</sup> which does not help real union. The West is continually producing mechanical power in excess of its spiritual control and India has produced a system of mechanical control in excess of its vitality. Rabindranath desires the union of the East and the West, because he is a believer in Internationalism.<sup>3</sup> By interna-

1. “If our poet Goethe says—orient und okzident sind nicht mehr zu trennen (East & West can no longer be separated), I should go further and say—East and West have never been separated”—Dr. Winternitz.

2. It is interesting to note the confession of Wilhelm II Ex-Kaiser of Germany in an interview with George Sylvester Viereck—

“The white races have no right to suppress the legitimate yearning and aspirations of the coloured races, merely because of their superiority in technique and material. Every nation must learn to respect the innate rights of every other nation which possesses a culture rooted in its own soil and which has played a part in the evolution of mankind. It is incumbent upon all of us to respect the traditions and institutions of others. Each race has the right to bring its own gift to others. It may be a benefit to the world to spread white civilisation, but we have no right to force our own idiosyncracies upon others. Our civilising activity must never be a camouflage for imperialism and industrial greed, conquest and slavery”.

3. “I admit that if Indian nationalism is to live, it can not afford to isolate itself from other nations but firstly we must

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tionalism, he means inter-dependance. That is the solution of the problem of the coming age. He knows that wherever the spirit of separation is supreme, there reigns darkness. "The fuel displays its differences but the fire is one." The people in all countries must find their affinity with one another. If the vision is obscured for the time being, that is all the more tragic for the world. He says—"I feel as much for the Negroes brutally lynched in America, often for economic reason and for the Koreans who are the latest victims of Japanese Imperialism, as for any wrongs done to the helpless multitude of my own country." He belongs to all.<sup>1</sup>

have a home before we can receive a guest and secondly Indian culture must discover itself before it can assimilate Western culture. She must vibrate with national life and then we can talk of the union of the two civilisations"—C. R. Das.

1. When the streams of ideals that flow from the East and from the West mingle their murmur in some profound harmony of meaning, it delights my soul. I feel proud whenever I find that the truth which dwells in the best thoughts of India has also been uttered in a different language, in a different part of the world. The best in the world have their fundamental agreement, because they are pure in truth. And therefore it is their function to unite, and dissuade the small from bristling up like prickly shrubs, in the pride of the minute points of their differences, only to hurt one another."—Rabindranath.

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Unless we can know India and Europe truly, avenues for meeting cannot be explored. Rabindranath's analysis of the situation might cure the obtuseness of vision that the world is suffering from. At least, it should make us alive to the situation, its oddities and crudities.

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“Deliverance is not for me in renunciation.  
I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand  
bonds of delight”

—*Rabindranath.*

## CHAPTER II.

### ANTI-STATE ATTITUDE.

**I**N politics, we are moving in a wrong way. It is true that India has been sick of political iniquities, the magnitude and crudeness of which should awake us to the real danger. It is not meet that we should waste breath over empty words, it is suicidal to direct the potentialities of an afflicted nation in a wrong way. Something constructive must be done towards amelioration of our political serfdom. When the political atmosphere is being smudged by the gluttonous and insensate barbarities of British administration, our leaders are approaching that self-same administration with a begging bowl for favour. Their activities are directed towards humouring or criticising those very masters under whose merciless rule, the breath of the whole nation is about to be choked.

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Our political show is a mockery—a got-up agitation, not enthused by love for country but for self. The welfare of the country does not guide our political leaders, it is the shadow of the Government house and Secretariate that is haunting them. The dumb millions of unfortunate countrymen are not of any concern to them—civilians and official parasites engage their whole attention. Political meetings are held by leaders not to address the countrymen at large but to make their voices heard by our rulers. Boycott agitation is kept up not because of love for the children of the soil but as a weapon to frighten the bureaucrats. The leaders talk of village reconstruction not for the sake of villages but for demonstrating their patriotism before the much-hated bureaucracy. The Congress gives programmes, constructive and destructive, not so much to further the interests of the people of India but as to hold up a counter-blast to the Simla and White-hall Gods. This is the way things are moving and behaving, thus clouding the vital issue while intangible signs of progress loom large on the surface. Self-deception which is the

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sap of our political life cannot go further. In view of this tragic situation that has arisen I would like to state in the following pages what Rabindranath has to say. It is time that we should get at the bed-rock of facts and realise that the mentality of India is non-political. "India was busy with her homes, her fields, her temples of worship, her schools, her village self-government. Thrones were not her concern. They passed overhead like clouds, now tinged with purple gorgeousness, now black with the threat of thunder."

### Europe is Politics : India is Society.

Rabindranath's attention has touched on the real point. India's heart is in the *society*, not in the state. Therefore, anti-state attitude in politics, says Rabindranath, is the need of hour.<sup>1</sup> But in Europe, the state is everything. This fundamental difference

1. The researches of Dr. R. C. Mozumder in "Corporate life in Ancient India," Dr. Bhandkar in "Charmicai Lectures," Mr. K. P. Jayswal in Ancient Hindu Polity, Dr. R. K. Mukherjee in Local Government in Ancient India, Dr. Pramatha Banerjee in Public Administration in Ancient India—all these show that Indian state is a loose federation of numerous self-governing bodies which are territorial or communal. Therefore India's attention is to

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must always be borne in mind. West looks to the state<sup>1</sup> for solution of every problem. India knows and recognises the society only. State's function is war, justice and protection. The function of society is religion, education, sanitation, agriculture etc. India's state might fall but the people will continue to live, if the society remain. They are bound up with the society whose growth and fall determine the rise and decline of the people. State is an organisation outside the vital concern of the people of India. They hold fast to the belief :—

Vain very vain, my weary search to find  
That-bliss which only centres in the mind.  
Why have I strayed from pleasure and repose  
To seek a good each Government bestows ?

society—not to state. Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar remarks—"Rabindranath poses the society against the state. In the attitude of indifferentism to the state, almost in the manner of Leroy-Beanlieu, he is an exponent of Spencerian individualism, verging, as it does, in anarchism. An anti-state attitude in India is tantamount however, to anti-Britishism."

1. "State is the nation organised in a way".—Green.

"The nation is a political idea".—Bluntschli.

"It does not matter who the sovereign is. It is enough if we have full liberty to elevate ourselves in the best possible manner. We demand Swaraj as it is the foundation, not the height of our future prosperity."—B. G. Tilak.

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In every Government, though terrors reign,  
Though tyrant kings or tyrant laws restrain,  
How small of all that human hearts endure,  
That part which laws or kings can cause or  
cure ?

Still to ourselves in every place consigned,  
Our own felicity we seek or find.”—Goldsmith.

Formerly, if the king had failed to do his duty by the subjects, society went on merrily and comfortably. People could not feel the indifference of the king at all. The Brahmins imparted education, the wealthy dug wells etc. Society went on with the welfare work inspite of the king. It is the society which at once made and unmade our people. But in the West, everything is vested in the state. If state crumbles down, it takes everything along with itself. Hence, politics is of paramount interest with the Europeans while it has always been of little concern to ourselves. The history of India is not the history of warfares, struggles and murders. Mogul and Pathan, Delhi and Agra—these were not the special features of India's history. India's history, if the reader be pleased to know truly, weaves

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itself round and about Nanak, Chaitanya, Tukaram, Kabir and Sankara—men that interpreted religion and issued social edicts.

Falsehood, hypocrisy, forgery etc. are not vices in politics. Politics in Europe is hurting Christianity and humanity. Ancient Greece and Rome were built on political states. So when the state crumbled, their civilisation also failed. But when in India, state failed, the people survived through reform of society. Our seat is in *home*. So long as we do our duty to home, we live. Every civilisation has a basis of its own and on the quality of that basis depends its lease of life. A civilization that hurts religion, is doomed. Europe is politics, India is society. Both are good in their own way. But if politics in Europe hurts religion as it does, it is sure to fall. On the other hand, when society in India became narrow and bigoted, it fell and along with it came the fall of the people. State in India was helpless. Thus it is that we hope to grow again through society. That is our own distinctive tradition. We shall be committing a grave mistake, if we re-build national status after the manner of the West. We should concentrate our attention

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on building homes. The making of man in a peaceful and congenial society, and not nation-making through struggles and chaos, should be our goal.

But, as ill-luck would have it, our attention has been diverted from society to state<sup>1</sup>. We have migrated from village to the city, which is our decay. From concentration in villages, it does not follow that we should be home-sick. A great obstacle to our progress is that we are more like a non-transportable luggage. We must earn abroad but concentrate at home, we must not be a stay-at-home people but we must not at the same time forget home. We are now leaning more towards the state. We are trying to win the state, not our own people and the fact is that we pride on our connection with the British. Rabindranath truly says :—

“The English have shut their doors against us in amusement, dinner, friendship etc., still if we can manage an entrance anyhow, we feel gratified. Kinship with our countrymen becomes insignificant before such pride. With

1. “Government is of great concern but of little import”—Flinder Petric.

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such a weak mind, we should by all means shun the elixir of favour."

It is high time therefore that we should focuss our attention from the state back to the society where we can find ourselves. The strong is always merciless to the weak—that is an instinct of humanity. We cannot expect good grace from the British. Rabindranath further says :—"With whom shall we fight ? With that stone which has not been smoothed by the blood of Jesus. How can we conquer it ? By meeting ? By petition ? By begging ?"

By attacking the British Government, we do not gain. First, Government here is outside our society, and secondly comes in the undue importance of the state. We are neglecting society—the vital thing in our civilisation. Our whole politics has now turned out to be a petition. We carry the vase of petition by mere spinning of words and weeping with no tears in eyes. Time has come that we should serve our country and not spend time in petition and protest.

There is no short-cut to freedom. We must have deeds, not words. We must be

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prepared to love our country.<sup>1</sup> "When love grows, he loves to work from the beginning. He does not scorn anything, great or small. He fears lest small duties are not done. Love wants to be useful, love wants to utilise himself but he is not eager to prove himself. But when heart is offended and wounded, he gushes out, he does not like to wait." We must love and work. It is the absence of love which is responsible for failures in our national movements. Our village people must know that a true relationship between the people and leaders does exist but our reputed and respected leaders conveniently forget and profitably exploit, that bond of union. Whenever, the leaders are snubbed in the city, they run out to villagers and cry hoarse—"We like to teach the English a lesson. Unless you join us, boycott won't be successful, so you must put on Indian cloth even at a considerable sacrifice." The leaders never think well of the villagers, nor do they (the leaders)

1 Without scrambling and quarrelling, one should follow what is in the Mahabharata :—"By meekness conquer wrath,

Falsehood by Truth,  
Meanness by generous gifts,  
Transgressions by ruth."

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respect them as their own. They do not say—"You wear Indian cloth, that will benefit you" They simply say—"Put on Indian cloth to put the English in difficulty." If the villagers fail to respond to the call for sacrifice, the leaders should blame themselves. So Rabindranath says :—"I repeat it again and again that without wasting our energy in excitement, turn yourself from the frowning faces of others (British). As the clouds in the month of Asar come down on sun-burnt earth in abundance, so you come down among all races, all people of the country. Bind the country by a network of welfare organisations. Expand your activity everywhere—so much so that high or low, Hindus, Moslems or Christians—all might congregate and reciprocate heart with heart. There would be Governmental attempts to obstruct us by suspicion and enmity. But we shall win, not by striking our head against obstacles but by overcoming them gradually by perseverance."

### **State within State.**

Rabindranath in his "Swadeshi Samaj" preaches the doctrine—"State within State."

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According to him, every province must have a representative gathering. That must have its branches in all villages and districts. The people should be conversant with the knowledge of local conditions. A "Mandali" consisting of few villages must be responsible for the welfare of villages. That "Mandali" must have a "Mandap" where people will meet in company and where representatives will distribute justice and settle the quarrels. Zaminders should take the charge of ryots—not exploit them. The villages must be organised and there should be a symphonic chord of happy relation between the masses and classes. Thus in scorn of British political state, our societal state will flow smoothly, bringing the innate potentialities of our people into fair play. The need of organisation cannot be over-emphasised. When our young men come and say—"we want to give, we want to work," there should be good organisation to utilise them. The tragedy is that our energy and work are being scattered. As a result, energy finds outlet in quarrel. Slavery is for them who will remain scattered. It is a rudimentary principle of freedom that we

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shall have to unite those whom we would like to protect. The one thing essential in attaining unity is self-control. If we fail to observe restraint in words and deeds, friction is bound to follow.

Our love for the country is nothing but a different phase of our covetous self-love. So our demagogues become autocrats. They scramble for power, they quarrel among themselves and they envy each other. When the time for fusion of national energy comes, we find them striking against each other. They rush out to extort sacrifice and money from the unwilling citizens. If they are given any power of leadership, they sit tight on them and suck them dry. They do not pretend to know that to tyrannise for the country is to tyrannise over country. Rabindranath's *Nikhiles* said truly :—“The slavery that has entered into our very bones is breaking out as ghastly tyranny.” The feeling of discontent that has been generated in the country must be brought within a compass, otherwise it would breed friction and the people would waste their energy over a small affair parading it as a great one. The need

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of the hour is that we must obey a leader and go out for work. "If we are to quarrel, we require quite a number of people scattered about but in fight one requires a General."

When a third party is sucking India, we raise our prayers to itself for grace and scramble and fight amongst ourselves. We do not observe any restraint in words, we are reckless, relentless and remorseless in sporting with country's honour and welfare and we are foolishly spending ourselves out over affrays.<sup>1</sup> So Rabindranath says :—Some one wants dominion status, some one wants full autonomy. But that is an empty talk—has no touch with realities. If dominion status, or autonomy are conceded, we can then rightly quarrel over it. But when the field remains un-ploughed, where is the need of filing a suit for division of crops.....We have obstacles within ourselves for liberty. We must conquer them by work, that is not to be done by

1. "The skill in spying other's faults  
when to one self turned,  
Will quickly lead to path of grace

And end in God-life earned"

Yagnavalka.

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hot discussion, rather they will be increased by quarrel," (Translated from a speech in 1907.)

These prophetic words were uttered by Rabindranath twenty-two years ago. Now in the year of Grace 1929, we are witnessing the same tragic spectacle. Country is left aside, national movements are neglected, but our leaders are dashing against each other over Dominion status cum Independence. The tragedy is they send ultimatum to Government, they cajole and carouse the state but the people and the country at large are not in their minds. They talk of "sanction" but they never intend to create it. They are out to run election not for the sake of constituencies but to flirt with the officials. They publish their programme of national work and look to the Secretary of State, if he has been frightened. When the question of real work comes, invariably they quarrel. Friction is a parasite-growth in our blood. We are born as if to lie scattered and talk loud.

We want respect from the Britishers but we should know by this time that he can

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command no respect who fails to wrest it.<sup>1</sup> Begging for sympathy and love is the worst tragedy of all. We must not abandon faith in ourselves. Before aspiring to anything great, we should cultivate those qualities which are absolutely necessary in the time of action. ‘History has a nemesis for an impotent craving after freedom.’—said Momsen. Rabindranath in another way puts the thing :—

“We find that every dependent nation has achieved freedom through revolution. We do not like to examine if we require anything else to attain and keep this freedom in perfect order, nor do we think if we are in possession of all those qualities or when occasion will demand, we shall any how have those things. That is the most deplorable and heart-rending affair. When humanity tossed by insult tries to prove its glory by ignoring all obstacles, it commits suicide in attempting the unexpected.”

1. “What is more dangerous to human race than any crime ? Active sympathy for the weak.....The weak must perish”  
—Nietzsche.

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When the movement of non-co-operation was launched in the country, Rabindranath reminded us of our duties. He frankly told us that our house was not in order and politics in our country was extremely petty and as such non-co-operation might mean only waste of our resources. Rabindranath in a letter to Mr. Andrews in 1920 said :

"Let us forget the Punjab affairs but never forget that we shall go on deserving such humiliation over and over again until we set our house in order. Do not mind the waves of the sea but mind the leaks in your vessel. Politics in our country is extremely petty. It has a pair of legs, one of which has shrunk and shrivelled and become paralytic and therefore feebly waits for the other one to drag it on. There is no harmony between the two and our politics, in its hoppings and totterings and falls, is comic and undignified. The entreaty and anger which alternately are struggling to find expression in the ludicrously lame member of this tragic partnership, both belong to our abject feebleness. When non-co-operation comes naturally as our final moral protest

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against the unnaturalness of our political situation, then it will be glorious, because true ; but when it is only another form of begging, then let us reject it.

The establishment of perfect co-operation of life and mind among ourselves must come first, through sacrifice and self-dedication and then will come in its natural course the non-co-operation. When the fruit completely ripens, it finds its freedom through its fulfilment of truth.

Our country is crying to her children for their co-operation in the removal of obstacles in our social life which for centuries have been hampering us in our self-realisation. We need co-operation in the sacrifice of love more than anything else, to prove to our country that she is ours ; and then we shall have the moral right to say to others : "We have nothing to do with you in our affairs." And for this all the moral fervour which the life of Mahatma Gandhi represents and which he, of all men in the world, can call up, is needed.

That such a precious treasure of power (viz, the moral fervour which the life of

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Mahatma Gandhi represents) should be put into the mean and frail vessel of our politics, allowing it to sail across endless waves of angry recrimination, is terribly unfortunate for our country, when our mission is to revive the dead with the fire of the soul. The external waste of our resources of life is great owing to external circumstances ; but that the waste of our spiritual resources should also be allowed to happen on adventures that are wrong from the point of view of moral truth is heart-breaking. *It is criminal to turn moral force into a blind force.*"

### **Immobile Society**

The real question is that no political miracle can be built on the quick sands of social slavery. Our society is now rotten. It does not move. Stagnation is a sign of death. It is standing like a marble rock with cartloads of traditions and abuses and we feel that we are being choked. Rabindranath hates that static state when mind does not grow, body does not move; *slokas* reign and traditions stop the flow of life. Where we stop, our ruin begins, because it is we

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who only stop while others go on. We are to keep pace with the world. The law is, we must live by cultivating life or die by taking to rest. He puts the case feelingly when he says:—“The chariot of Truth is out on the way —its call is resounding every direction. Those who are cowards, those who are idle, those who practise self-deception are collecting the shastric injunctions into a heap to obstruct the chariot, can they expect to survive ? The society which is not for walking, the society which is for the lame, can that society protect us from the grinding wheel of the choriot of Truth ? Is mere breathing everything of man’s existence ? Is not man’s mind’s life greater than that of body ? We shall have to take initiation into Truth by shaking off obstacles..... Year in and year out, we shall be standing like beggars at the crossing of the world’s journey and we shall extend our arms for mendicancy to those travellers passing the streets in chariots and say—“Give us food, give us knowledge, give us freedom.” If they ask in return, why don’t you accompany us in search of food, truth and freedom ? Shall we be saying again

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and again in reply that moving is banned on us as we are the best in the world and that is the simple reason that all other ways are shut against us except begging from those travellers who have no restrictions to move. If that be the case, the world will not be a whit poorer if we sink down with that heavy static load of superiority around our neck." (Translated from an article in "Bichitra")

Without protest we have been obeying men, books and customs from our very birth. We are used to this obedience to such a degree that we cannot find out if we have any right over a thing. "The very right of mastery is the right of humanity—that is the greatest truth. Where this truth is obscured by various mantras, slokas and rules ; where people are bound down by customs, lest there should be any mistake in judgment ; where people destroy their own paths lest they should travel far ; that country is the greatest slave-factory and that country teaches disrespect to one's own people on the plea of religion." One should not fear mistakes. The static state brought about by

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apprehension of mistakes is the most deplo-  
rable state. Country is to move, right or  
wrong, because movement shows health. The  
bogey of mistakes should not frighten us to  
tread the path of political freedom. Rabindra-  
nath says—"Self-determination in politics  
not only increases a sense of responsibility but  
also enlarges the mind. Those whose minds  
are confined to small social castes and  
sub-castes would find an opportunity  
of knowing people in a large circle, if  
they get political freedom. Lack of this  
opportunity degrades every man. In these  
circumstances, if people do not broadbase  
their life on the vast plains of humanity,  
then his ambitions, aspirations and  
thought, all would get narrowed down.  
This narrowness of human soul is more  
inauspicious than death itself. So we  
must demand political freedom, even if there  
be an apprehension of mistake. We shall  
fall and move but for Heaven's sake, do  
not look to our falling only to stop our  
movement."

But our country is peculiar. While we  
want political freedom, we are opposed to social

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freedom<sup>1</sup> Thus our political freedom becomes a mere delusion. "Those who are anxious to soar high in political sky are the very persons who like to enchain the society." Things do not improve in this wise. The mind which is prepared to obey a narrow

1. "They (The Westerners) are thus winning the world, outwardly and inwardly, not only by the force of their arms but also by the power of their inquiring intellect. But we are wholly and solely householders; that is to say, we have been reduced to mere appurtenances of our household, held down to it with a thousand burdens. With the burden of our livelihood has become intertwined the burden of our social observance. So clogged and hampered are we with the compulsion of unmeaning rites, that our more important duties become impossible of proper fulfilment, our strength is so exhausted by our social ceremonials— from birth ceremony, through the whole series, to death ceremony—exerting their way over both this world and the next, that we are bereft of the energy to take any step forward. What wonder that the children born and bred in this atmosphere should be defeated at every turn by the others?.....

So long as we were content to sit quiet, it was not so unbearable, this accumulating burden of unmeaning thing heaped mountain-high on our backs—it was even possible to make use of it as a cushion on which to recline. But when we attempt to rise and shoulder it, in order to move forward, then indeed does our backbone bend under the strain... Filled to the brim and loaded to breaking point as they are with all this rubbish, to them comes the mandate from the Congress platform that they must keep step and pace with their opponents, the mobile freemen, for swaraj must be achieved in double-quick time. They have not the language wherewith to word their reply,

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and shackles-ridden society cannot do anything healthy. In society, we are dumb-driven cattle, so in politics we cannot possibly be strong. Our strength is dried up by customs and traditions that have no merit save their age. People whose every movement is regulated by force from without cannot but grumble and grope in political world outside. We appreciate our yearning for political freedom but we tell at the same time people to get yoked to cartloads of past abuses. That is just like an order that "we shall open one eye and close the other." But such order can not be executed and the result is confusion within and without. So Rabindranath tritely remarks :—

"Where Providence punishes us with a cane, our sentiment cries out—"Remove the cane." We have forgotten if canes are removed, there are bamboos. Fault is not in

but the sore hearts within their crushed-in frames are nevertheless full with the unuttered plaint:—"We are only too willing to march ahead at the bidding of our political leaders, if but our Social leaders will deign to relieve us of our burden." Whereupon the social leader stands aghast—"What, is not that your 'sanatan' burden?"

Rabindranath's Letters from Java.

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canes or bamboos but in ourselves. Fault is we obey the master instead of Truth. Canes cannot be removed, if things continue in this way."

### **Religion and Religious System.**

As long as we shall follow a soulless religious system instead of Religion itself, we cannot hope to progress either in politics or society. When Europe was under the hypnotic influence of the Church, she could not make any progress, but when she refused to obey the Church, the world was ready to obey her. Our Religion and Religious system are different. We in India are extolling that system thinking it to be an essence.<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to note in this connection the broad points of difference between

1. Regarding the trait of religious idea, now prevalent in the world of today, Mr. Wells says—"Speculative explanations, metaphors hardened by usage into quasi-factual statements, fantasies arising out of germinating and suppressed impulses, false analogies, parables begotten and distorted, dogmatic excesses in explicitness evoked by irritation of contradiction, criticism, the odd compromises of theological diplomatists, the craving for super-natural sanctions and vindications and the nightmare creation of fear that haunting shadow of all conscious life have mingled inextricably in every religious fabric."

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Religion and Religious systems, as out-lined by Rabindranath. Religion says—If you do not respect man, bad luck for both. Religious system says—You will fall from religion, if you do not follow the regulations which seek to disrespect men cruelly. Religion says—He who hurts one for nothing kills his soul. Religious system says—The parents who give water to a widowed daughter in certain “Tithi” encourage vice. Religion says—By penitence and welfare work, sin within and without is cured. Religious system says—In solar eclipse, if you bathe in a certain river, the fourteen generations upward will be emancipated. Religion says—Have knowledge of this wide earth by crossing the seas and mountains. That will enlarge the mind. Religious system says—If you cross the seas, you are to pay the penalty. Religion says—Real men are always to be worshipped irrespective of their castes and creeds. Religious system says—He who is Brahmin is superior, however degraded he might be.

We are following that system with irrational reverence. That does not elevate any-

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one. Providence does not respect blind fidelity to any system. "Sectarianism is materialistic. It ever tries to build its tower of triumph with its numerical strength, temporal power and external observances. It breeds in the minds of its members a jealous sense of separateness, that gives rise to conflicts more deadly than conflicts of worldly interests. It is a worse enemy of the truth of religion than atheism for sectarianism proudly appropriates as its own share the best portion of the homage that we bring to our God."—Rabindranath.

That encourages slavery—not freedom. With such a mind, laden by ignorance, oppressed by abuses of past, India cannot hope to attain salvation. "Know thyself" is the need of the hour. When "self" is obscured from vision by heaps of social abuses, the true remedy is to brush aside the heaps of rubbish that obtrude the vision. Unless one has vision in proper perspective, how could one expect to see things rightly and set things in order? Let me state here what Rabindranath said twelve years ago :—

"Ye people bowed down under the weight of premature old age, ye cowards who have

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lost confidence in their selves, ye fools knocked down by untruths all around, today is not the day of quarrelling for jealousy and malice. Time is over in scrambling for false hopes and prestige like beggars, do not delude yourself with that false pride—the pride which asserts, nourished by ignorance, in home but is ridiculed in the wide world. To have self-gratification by blaming others is a sign of weakness---we should have nothing to do with it. Our sins are growing in volume, age after age ; our masculinity is humiliated by them, our judgment obscured—this is the day of shaking off age-old abuses. The greatest obstacle to our moving forward is past, its dusts and withered leaves are clouding the new rising sun of the new age, they are overpowering the potentialities of youth. We shall have to release ourselves from the abuses of the past and we shall then be able to save ourselves from the shame of failure.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Aurobindo Ghose rebuking our clinging to Past says in the strain of the Poet:—“Go on we must; for if we do not, Time itself will force us forward in spite of our fancied immobility. And this is the most pitiable and dangerous movement of all, for what can be more pitiable than to be borne helplessly forward clinging to the old that disintegrates in spite of our efforts and

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But before one sets about the task of reformation, he must be in a position to say like "Gora"—"Today I am an Indian. I harbour no enmity within me towards any society, Hindu, Mussalman, Christian. I belong to every caste of India and everyone's food is my food. I have travelled in every district of Bengal. I have received hospitality in slums but I have always moved with an attitude of aloofness, which I have not been able to conquer. And I felt an emptiness within me. I tried so long to ignore it but I am free today. I have become so pure that even pariah cannot make me impure."

shrieking to the dead ghosts and dissolving fragments of the past to save us alive! And what can be more dangerous than to impose immobility on that which is in its nature mobile? This means an increasing and horrible rottenness; it means an attempt to persist on as a putrid and stinking corpse instead of as a living and self-renewing energetic creature."

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## CHAPTER III.

### A CRITIC OF BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

A wave of infatuation and excitement is passing through the country which makes correct diagnosis of the situation improbable—if not impossible. We do not know where we are and what to do. Pretension, not action, is the ruling mood ; idle criticism, not constructive work, is the sheet anchor of the nation. Our leaders love excitement more than the work. They give infatuation a higher place. They think if they can abuse the British Government in the most violent language, in a language which carries foam—not conviction, their services for the country end. Their duty is to generate heat and the people heated thereby welcome them as prophets of nationalism.

But in the following pages, I would like to depict Rabindranath as a critic of the

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British Government. There is a belief already current in the country that Rabindranath, poet as he is, is a very docile citizen and he dare not criticise the British rule, oppressive as it is. Moreover, people go further and say that Rabindranath, if he has any politics at all, preaches the politics of subservience and he has always allied himself with the iniquities of the British administration in India. It has been his peculiar misfortune to be thoroughly misunderstood by his countrymen.

Rabindranath is the most uncompromising critic of British rule in India. He is more extreme than many extremist leaders, more penetrating than other unimaginative critics, and more critical than many other educated Indians. Of all leaders, I believe, he has been the most successful in spotting out the worst defects of British rule and he has exposed them relentlessly and mercilessly. His criticisms carry conviction, carry strength and touch all. He hates, he criticises but he never grows nonsensical and unimaginative. That is his virtue and that is responsible for a fall in the barometer of popular favour.

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Rabindranath has never tried to be popular. He has spoken truths, cruel and unpleasant. He does believe in work—not excitement.<sup>1</sup> “What spark is to flame, excitement is to work. By striking, one can have spark but that does not dispel the darkness of the room.” He knows that excitement has its need in bringing out life-force but that must be harnessed in action. But all around, we find infatuation only, leaders talking tall and loud with no vision for future and love for country. So Rabindranath says :—

“Where are the priests of national awakening in India ? Wherever they might be, it is true they are not restless, they are not mad, they are not to inflame people’s heart by speeches with no end in action. They must have brain, heart, devotion, patience, calmness of deep knowledge and a happy combination of will-force and perseverance.”

There is another reason why Rabindranath has not found fault with the British Govern-

1. Mr. Gandhi also deprecates excitement in the most violent language —

“In civil disobedience, there should be no excitement. Civil disobedience is a preparation for mute suffering.”

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ment in season and out of season. He does not believe in mere abusing. He does not believe in the "politics of petition." "If you want prestige, if you want life, life you are to sacrifice first"--that is his politics.

Rabindranath believes in self-reliance—so he says :—

"I make bold to ask who is there to feel offended standing before the jaw of destruction—who would like to quarrel in our deathbed \* \* \*. If the house is on fire, can we rest satisfied by sending for the police. Meantime, when our people would be burnt to death, can we find any consolation in arranging a big meeting to protest against the Sub-Inspector's lethargy to the Magistrate ? We should be upto doing what we can and failure without effort is a scandal —a sin." He does not like to divert his attention so much to the British Government as to his own people.<sup>1</sup> He frankly says :—

1. "The Moderates of our country beg from them with folded hands and the Extremists beg with eyes red with anger, that is the difference between the two. The former wag their tails before the master's table, and the latter only bark. The Moderates think that they are wise and the Extremists think that they are very heroic. But lo ! The cuffs from the British fists and the kicks

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"I do not belong to those who think that running to and fro on King's highroad with petition is the chief work of the country."

Rebuking his own countrymen, Rabindranath said :—

"Now we are torn by partisan spirit and narrowness. We cannot be united. We cannot believe in one another. We do not obey anyone's leadership. Our institutions burst like bubbles, at first there is much ado, but afterwards they are scattered and deformed and then they grow lifeless. When we are asked to sacrifice anything, we pretend to be busy—but in the long run we fall back. Anyhow, we want our self-advertisement. We find full satisfaction in self-advertisement and agitation, but afterwards we become drowsy. We cannot settle down to anything which requires

from the British boots fall equally on the back of both. The crumbs from their master's tables, too, fall equally for both and they get busy fighting amongst themselves over the division of crumbs. Thus they do not have the time to attend to the work of our country's welfare. Real work remains neglected. Under these circumstances, kicks from the master's boots are more precious to us than crumbs from his table. So even death is better for us than to extend our hands to receive gifts from such people as the British"—Rabindranath.

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patience, labour and devotion. Wonder it is how have we come out with such a weak, immature and worn-out character”

But with equal vehemence, he has rebuked the British Government. The situation as interpreted by Rabindranath stands thus :— At every conceivable opportunity we abuse the Government. That shows we want bravado—not work. After being abused, the Government cannot grant us favour because they think that will encourage us. Thus ill-feeling grows between two parties, making the situation worse on both sides. Rabindranath believes that much of the agitation is the growth of wounded heart. Many situations might be saved by sweet words from both sides.<sup>1</sup>

Then I would state what are the factors, according to Rabindranath, responsible for breeding conflict and ill-feeling between the Englishmen and Indians.

1. I do not blame the British. If we were weak in number, as they are, we too would perhaps have resorted to the same methods as they are now employing. Terrorism and deception are weapons not of the strong but of the weak. If we Indians take care of ourselves, the English and the rest of the world would take care of themselves. Our contribution to the world’s

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### No union between Ruler and Ruled.

England is audacious. The rulers do not mix with the ruled because race-superiority stands in the way. Hence friction goes on. "The Englishman," to quote Mathew Arnold "employs simply material interest for his work of fusion and beyond these nothing except scorn and rebuke. Accordingly, there is no vital union between him and the races he has annexed."

Rabindranath in his inimitable way says :— "England does good but extends no mercy, protects but does not love, doles out justice but never respects, fails to water the ground but sows seed in abundance. But if at last crop of gratitude fail to grow, is the soil to be responsible? Is it not the universal rule that unless you work with heart, crop does not grow ?

The English-educated Indians always try to prove that the British benefit is no benefit at all and that is a heartless act of grace which does not generate gratitude. "The

progress must therefore consist in setting our house in order."—Mr. Gandhi.

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English give us food but there is no taste—so when we vomit, they grow angry.”

British rule is in that sense uncreative. Mr. Wells is also of the same opinion—“In India, the Briton is a ruler as firm and self-assured and uncreative as the Romans.”

There is no human relationship. There is no attempt by England to win our heart.<sup>1</sup> Referring to colour prejudice which eats away the human elements of relationship, Rabindranath says :—

“White nation like day is wide awake, active, and given to investigation. Black nation like night is inactive, idle, and shrouded in dream. It might be that there is depth, sweetness, grace like night in black nation but unfortunately the active and busy white nation has no time to discover it and even all these have no value for them.”

Costumes and customs, habits and nature—all are dissimilar. If the English had

1. “India’s greatest glory will consist not in regarding Englishman as her implacable enemies, fit only to be turned out of India at the first available opportunity, but in turning them into friends and partners in a new Commonwealth of nation in the place of

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mixed with us, all these differences might have been got over in no time. But they vaunt of their superiority and feel it a moral degradation in mixing with us.

Press in England always abuse the Indians. Thus the wide gulf between the Englishmen and Indians becomes wider. Dr. Sunderland was perfectly right when he said :— “If Great Britain is to maintain peaceful relations with India, she must breed fewer Kipplings and more Gilbert Murrays.”

England rules India because she needs India—certainly not for India’s good but “the usual excuse of those who do evil to others is that their object is to do them good” (John Morley). Referring to the question why England has failed to get India, Rabindranath says :—“The only reason for this is that for England, her need of India is overwhelmingly predominant. The satisfaction of need like the gorging of food has the one-sided vision of getting with no immensity of not getting for its perspective. So it

an empire based upon exploitation of the weaker or undeveloped nation and races of the earth and therefore based upon force.”

—Mr. Gandhi.

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cannot be a true vision and because it is not true, there is no joy in it, no wonder, no respect. Because the relation of need fails to inspire one with a disinterested spirit of sacrifice, Englishmen show such an amazing lack of personal generosity towards Indians. I am not making a complaint of this but only noting its inevitableness. The India which has been captured by England's greed has been lost by England's soul. And so, while out of it, the Englishman makes profit and in it feels pride, India remains for him a burden heavy with regret."

### **Impersonal Rule.**

Nation rules India—says Rabindranath. There is officialdom, there is organisation but there is no human hand. Referring to the question of impersonal rule, the Poet says :—"We had known the hoardes of Moghals and Pathans who invaded India but we had known them as human races, we had never known them as a nation. But this time we had to deal, not with kings, not with human races but with a nation."

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He also puts forth the characteristics of the rule by Nation :—

“In this reign of the Nation, the governed are pursued by suspicions ; and there are suspicions of a tremendous mass of organised brain and muscle. Punishments are meted out which leave a trail of miseries across a large bleeding tract of the human heart \* \* \* It (British nation) is like the pack of predatory creatures that must have its victims. \* \* \* Government by nation is like a hydraulic press whose pressure is impersonal and on that account completely effective.”

In former times, Badsha ruled India. But now India is being exploited for a nation. Formerly, it was ruled by one—the rest were common. Whatever unjust one Moghul ruler might be, that is not so irksome as it is now and Rabindranath says :—“Whatever production a country might have, it can bear the burden of a king—not of a whole nation. “You can please one God but not crores of gods.”

Referring to former rule in India, Rabindranath says :—“We were not confronted with

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a future which was a dead white wall of granite blocks eternally guarding against the expression and extension of our own powers which are becoming atrophied at their very roots by the scientific process of paralysis.”

### **Law and Order**

British rule is a soulless machine—only busy with enforcing Law and Order, Power and Discipline. It distributes no love, it is ready to squeeze one’s heart but it must have its system kept in tact in scorn of public opinion. Rabindranath says :—“Our king demands loyalty and devotion from us. But devotion belongs to heart and that presupposes reciprocity. That means you are to come to me, love me and that is not a question of force.”

The Poet exposes the system thoroughly when he says :—“Mere administration is unproductive, it is not creative, not being a living thing. It is a steam roller, formidable in its weight and power, having its uses but it does not help the soil to become fertile.”

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The very same idea was expressed by Gandhi when he said :—“Affection cannot be regulated or manufactured by law.”

Need of law and order there is but that does not mean it will be given extra-prominence as is being given in the British rule. I quote the Poet’s criticism of “Law and Order” in extenso :—

“And if we find that the interest of law and order is crowding out all other interests, devouring the revenue till very little of it is left for assuaging the thirst that tortures or preventing the disease that decimates ; if we find that the store of generosity is nearly exhausted in the decorations, the comforts, the largeness of the guardians of peace ; when, be they on the civil or the military side, not the least of their importunities goes unattended to and yet when the children of the soil are in extremity, the only help they get is to be reminded of the maxim that God helps those who help themselves ; then does this disproportion in its enormity, give to these favoured watchdogs the aspect of emissaries of some malignant planet of acquisitiveness presiding

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over India's destiny..... So, if our rulers ask us whether we do not want law and order in the land, our reply is we do ; but we object to life and mind being bled white for their sake..... Our complaint is not against the police but against extravagant indulgence which they enjoy. We do not object to the fire being kept up but to the absence of any cooking pot over it. And when the cost of blaze becomes so exorbitant as to leave nothing over to fill the pot, then, if in answer to our tears which spring from the gnawing emptiness within, the question is thundered against us—"Are we not then to light up your hearth ? We have to falter back—yes, yes, no doubt but not for our cremation, please."

### Repressive Policy.

The Poet cannot brook injustice. Whenever any iniquity is perpetrated in this unfortunate country, he protests gallantly and brilliantly.

Referring to the Sedition Bill, Rabindranath said :—"Is it not terrible therefor ? The country will fail to hide itself to the extent

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the press will be free. If at any time in a dark night, our weak Mother India, driven to desperation and madness, ever tread on the path of violence, the dogs might not bark in the gate, the city's police commissioner might not know it, the King's watchman might sleep but the Mother's bangles are sure to zingle in the press—they will refuse to be stopped. But if the watchman by his own effort force the zingling bangles to stop, it might be convenient for his sleep but it is a mystery how will it help his watch".

Stripped of metaphors, the above passage clearly says if press is muzzled, it will simply drive discontent under ground. Discontent cannot be removed by such repressive measures and they will force the country to tread the path of revolution. It will be in the interest of the Government to make press free because that will have the psychology of the nation mirrored there, otherwise Government will find it a difficult task to feel the pulse of the country and that will make governmental task harder.

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Judging the consequences of Sedition Bill, he said :—

“It will be a terrible state for us to grope in mysterious darkness with the press muzzled. Then our activities will look all the more black before the Government officers. Suspicion will make the king’s rod sharper and the subjects’ heart will be heavy with moroseness and be poisoned with speechless despondence. We are slaves to the English. But the law of nature is not so. *Their stroke* will hurt us. With all their resentment, they cannot banish this law of universe. They can strike more vehemently but that will also increase the pain, because, that is the law of God. There is no prohibitory section in the Penal Code. Heart-burning, if it cannot find expression in words, will begin to gather in heart. I am afraid to think to what extent will the relationship between the king and the subjects be deformed in such unhealthy and unnatural state”.

If the freedom of press is taken away, the true form of foreign domination is exhibited. Repression has one consolation for the

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Indians, says Rabindranath, because thereby the English recognise the powers of the Indians. "Conflict with the English has generated a heat within us whereby our moribund life-force is being invigorated."

In the days of calamity, The Poet sang :—  
"The more they will tighten their bondage,  
the more loose will our bondage grow. The  
more their eyes will grow red, the more  
will our eyes be opened."

Rabindranath has asked the Indians not to submit but to stand erect :—

"Where love exists, there is pride in being modest and low but where it does not exist, whatever be the consequences, keep your heart open and straight, do not submit to meanness, shun begging and do not abandon faith in oneself."

### **Memorable Letter.**

After the "Massacre of Amritsar", a monumental scandal in the chapter of British rule in India, Rabindranath was greatly shocked and without comment, I quote the letter which will speak for itself. The following letter was

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written to Lord Chelmsford by Rabindranath renouncing his Knighthood :—

“Your Excellency,

The enormity of the measures taken by the Government in the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilized governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent and remote. Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organisation for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification. The accounts of the insults and sufferings undergone by our brothers in the Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been ignored

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by our rulers possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine as salutary lessons. This callousness has been praised by most of the Anglo-Indian papers which have in some cases gone to the brutal length of making fun of our sufferings without receiving the least check from the same authority, relentlessly careful in smothering every cry of pain and expression of judgment from the organs representing the sufferers. Knowing that our appeals have been in vain and the passion of vengeance is blinding the noble vision of statesmanship in our government, which could so easily afford to be magnanimous as befitting its physical strength and moral tradition, the very least I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised into a dumb anguish of terror. The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation and I for my part wish to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who for their so-called insignificance are liable

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to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings.

And these are the reasons which have painfully compelled me to ask Your Excellency with due deference and regret, to relieve me of my title of Knighthood which I had the honour to accept from His Majesty the King at the hands of Your predecessor, for whose nobleness of heart I still entertain great admiration.

*Yours faithfully,*  
Rabindranath Tagore.

Commenting on the Dyer debates, Rabindranath in his superb and cutting style wrote—

“The result of the Dyer debates in both Houses of Parliament makes painfully evident the attitude of mind of the ruling classes of this country towards India. It shows that no outrage, however monstrous, committed against us by agents of their government, can arouse feelings of indignation in the hearts of those from whom our Governors are chosen.

The unabashed condonation of brutality expressed in their speeches and echoed in their newspapers is ugly in its frightfulness.

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The feeling of humiliation about our position under the Anglo-Indian domination has been growing stronger every day for the last fifty years or more ; but the one consolation we had was our faith in the love of justice in the English people whose soul had not been poisoned by the fatal dose of power which could only be available in a dependency where the manhood of the entire population had been crushed down to helplessness.

Yet the poison had gone further than we expected and it has attacked the vital organs of the British nation. I feel that our appeal to their higher nature will meet with less and less response every day. I only hope that our countrymen will not lose heart at this but employ all their energies in the services of their country with a spirit of indomitable courage and determination.

The late events have conclusively proved that our true salvation lies in our own hands and that a nation's greatness can never find its foundation in half-hearted concessions of contemptuous niggardliness.

It is the sign of a feeble character to seek for a short-cut to fulfilment through the

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favour of those whose interest lies in keeping it barred—the one path to fulfilment is the difficult path of suffering and sacrifice. All great boons come to us through the power of the immortal spirit we have within us and that spirit only proves itself by its defiance of danger and loss."

*(Rabindranath's letter to Andrews.)*

### **Justice.**

The greatest claim of the British to a civilised administration of India is that their rule is broadbased on even-handed administration of justice. In the opinion of many, Justice is the greatest blessing of British rule. But those who have experiences of the real situation know it full well that justice becomes a mockery when racial questions are involved. The so-called judicial impartiality evaporates when the Europeans are charged with grave offences against the Indians. This glaring inequality and iniquity have not escaped the attention of Rabindranath. He puts the thing bluntly and frankly—“Over and again, acquittal of the European

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accused and the indifference of the Government thereto shows great disrespect of the English towards the Indians."

Rabindranath says that any protest against this treatment is useless. It is the natural law of universe to hurt and disrespect meanness. It is high time that the Hindus should unite ; they should be trained, disciplined and developed. The innate potentialities must be brought out in full play. We must have manhood, otherwise these things will go on. "When the English will feel that we can stake life for justice, they will not cast us aside." We beg favour—so we do not get. Justice is to be wrested, because favour is always likely to be abused.

### **Imperialism.**

Imperialism is a soulless force. It is a plea for greater injustice. In its normal way, many acts of injustice could not have been perpetrated but for that driving force—Imperialism. There are human elements which obstruct people to do injustice to others. Left to themselves, they will shudder to do

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an act which can be easily accomplished, if there is any logic behind it—such as Imperialism. It is a kind of logic with the mighty and powerful to conquer human weakness. If softer elements overtake humanity, it can shake itself off and do some heinous act on the plea and strength of a doctrine or weapon, such as Imperialism. “In individual relationship, what you call theft, hypocrisy, forgery, murder, dacoity, you can reform that by the word “ism”, rather you can make it a question of pride.” History gives such numerous instances. British Imperialism is strewn . broadcast with such scandals. British nation would have blushed to perpetrate many of its oppressions, recorded in history, if there would have been no driving and maddening force of Imperialism. This Imperialism has blighted many nations, it has deprived the world of many good treasures. It is more organised than Periclean Imperialism of Athens, and necessarily more devastating. It has helped the cohesion of many countries in the British Commonwealth only to be positively harmful to the world. British Imperialism is now the greatest tragedy of

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the world. That demon is all-devouring, intensely thirsty and immensely destructive. But that demon moves about under a cloak—so it is all the more dangerous.

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“Prisoner, tell me, who was it that wrought  
this unbreakable chain.  
It was I, said the prisoner, who forged this  
chain very carefully.”

—Rabindranath.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HINDU-MOSLEM QUESTION.

THE Hindu-Moslem question is of outstanding importance in our political life. There is no clear agreement between the two communities. On the contrary, the under-current of disaffection and mutual discord often come to the surface in the shape of violent riots resulting in serious loss of life and property. But a nation cannot progress through internal feuds and it is this absence of solidarity between the Hindus and Moslems that is a great peril to the prosperity of our country. Rabindranath understands and has made it quite clear that successful fight with the foreigners would be an absurd proposition unless and until we set our house in order. True it is that we are angry with the British and sick of their iniquities

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but any attempt to eradicate British mis-rule is sure to prove abortive if we do not compose differences between ourselves. We have lived with the Moslems for a considerable length of time but we have never tried to understand them. We have not mixed with them in a spirit of accommodation. By always isolating ourselves we have simply fostered differences—forged them ahead and to such a degree that in our struggle with the alien Government we can not count on Moslem co-operation and necessarily, our struggle resolves itself into a feeble attempt in which one-third of our own countrymen stand aloof in amused unconcern.

We have formed our society in a manner that keeps our Moslem brethren at a considerable distance. We have scorned them, we have inflicted injustice on them and retribution has come to us in the form of injury by those whom we injured. The contribution of the Moslems towards India's well-being is not negligible but we have been ungrateful. Rabindranath says :—“The Mahammadan has come to India from outside, laden with his own stores of knowledge and feeling and

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his wonderful religious democracy, bringing freshet after freshet to swell the current. In our music, our architecture, our picture art, our literature, the Mahammadans have made their permanent and precious contributions. Those who have studied the lives and writings of our mediaeval saints and all the great religious movements that sprang up in the time of Moslem rule, know how deep is our debt to this foreign current that has so intimately mingled with our life."

Thus our gratitude to the Moslems should be considerable.<sup>1</sup> India's culture is now the product of Hindu culture and Moslem culture,

### 1. "The gifts of the Moslem age to India are :—

- (1) Restoration of touch with the outer world which included the revival of our Indian navy and sea-borne trade both of which had been lost since the decline of Cholas.
- (2) Internal peace over a large part of India, especially north of the Vindhyaas.
- (3) Uniformity secured by the imposition of the same type of administration.
- (4) Uniformity of social manners and dress among the upper classes irrespective of creed.
- (5) Indo-Saracen art in which the mediaeval Hindu and Chinese schools were blended together. Also new style of architecture and the promotion of industries of a refined kind (e. g. shawl, inlaying, kinkhab, muslin, carpet, etc.)

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intermingled in one current which is overflowing our national life. But we Hindus have always treated them as foreigners. Rabindranath blames the Government for the policy of bifurcating the Hindus and Moslems but he equally blames the Hindus for the shabby treatment, meted out unto the Moslems. So he says :—“We have not respected each other, we have not helped each other ; we have not even tried to know each other.” We shall have to remove this mutual indifference and scorn. We need unity, says Rabindranath, not for the sake of carrying on our Congress programme and showing our strength and solidarity to the British. We need unity, because the lack of it hurts our religion, degrades our humanity, narrows down our intellect, retards the growth of our knowledge, infects our mind with superstitions

(6) A common “lingua franca” called Hindustani or Rekhta and an official prose style.

(7) Rise of our vernacular literature, as the fruits of peace and economic prosperity under the Empire of Delhi.

(8) Monotheistic religious revival and Sufism.

(9) Historical literature.

(10) Improvements in the art of war and civilisation in general.

—Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar.

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and stands in the way of our craving for freedom which will make us stand erect in this wide world. We want unity, because we want to grow. It has been the mission of India to unify diversity, to accommodate all and to scorn none. This mission has been carried out not by extinction of differences but by adjustment, love and service. Rabindranath says by way of advice to his countrymen :— “Win the country by welfare effort—those who suspect you—overcome their suspicions—those who are jealous of you, defeat their jealousy. Strike the bolted door again and again. Do not go away in despondence and with a wounded heart. Human heart can never refuse human heart for all time to come.<sup>1</sup>

The Government is now carrying on the policy of divide and rule. The Moslems are scrambling for loafs and fishes. At this

1. “I have laid stress upon Hindu-Moslem unity as one of the most important essentials. But it should be no lip unity, nor bania unity, it should be a unity based on a recognition of heart..... Hindu-Moslem friendship is not a bargain ; whether a Hindu or Mussalman does evil, it is evil, it is evil done by an Indian to an Innian. Unity can have no other meaning than this. Nationalism is nothing, if it is not at least this.”—Mr. Gandhi.

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dark hour, it would be interesting to recall what Rabindranath said as the President of the Provincial Conference at Pabna in 1314 B. S.:—"From the very beginning, we have received English training and have secured Government jobs much more than the Mussalmans. Thus there has arisen a gulf of difference. Real unity could not be achieved unless this gulf is bridged over. If the Moslems get jobs in abundance, then the conflict due to dissimilarity will evaporate. Let us pray gladly that Government favour which was falling on us might also fall on the Moslems. When the limit will be reached, they will find that poverty of heart is not mitigated by favours without, they will then understand that nothing can be had except by gaining strength and that is impossible without unity. When they will know that we are born in the same country and it will be irreligious and sacrilegious for them to mar unity, and without religion, interest cannot be protected, then and then only we will stand hand in hand in the common meeting ground for common purpose. However, we must be ready for the sacrifice, the pati-

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ence, the watchfulness and self-control, necessary for unifying politically these two distinct groups.”<sup>1</sup>

The above extracts from Rabindranath’s speech some 21 years ago show a clear and statesmanlike grasp of the situation. It is on these lines that Deshabandhu C. R. Das thought fifteen years after and adopted the memorable Hindu-Moslem Pact in scorn of great opposition from his Hindu brothers.

Rabindranath has analysed the essential differences between a Hindu and Moslem.

1. Here is the statement of a true and eminent Musalman scholar:—

India is our own mother-country which gave us birth. We have made our homes here, married here, begotten children here and here on this soil of India, we have buried our sacred dead. India therefore must needs be dearer to us than any other country upon earth. We should love this very soil of India which is mingled with the dust of our ancestors. For a thousand years, our own religion of Islam has been intimately bound up with India; and in India, Islam has won some of the greatest triumphs for its now peculiar from of civilisation. We should love, therefore, the history and Government of India which have been shaped by such great monarchs as Akbar the Great and his successors. I cannot bear to hear Indian Musalmans speaking without reverence and affection for India. By all means, let us love our Musalman brethren in other country and have nothing to do with the encouragement of those who tell us that we, Musalmans, must always be looking outside India for our religious hopes and their fulfilment.

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A Mahomedan is defined by his religion. His religion does not consist merely in its spiritual essence; a great deal of it is formal, the outcome of special historical circumstances. A Hindu is known by his speciality *i.e.* social conventions. Surrounded in his personal life by prohibitions of all kinds about the most insignificant details of his daily career, an orthodox Hindu lives insulated in the confinement of his conventional solitary cell. His is a world which has one gate of entrance, the gate of birth, though the gates of departure are innumerable. But a Moslem is dominated by the externals of religion which make it difficult to establish channels of intimate relationship with neighbours belonging to a different religion. Thus we must know that the Hindus and Moslems can never have any real union, until we can cast off the shackles of our non-essentials and free our mind from the grip of unmeaning tradition. But "in our greed for immediate political result, we are apt to ascribe the fact of our tendency towards separation to accidental circumstances, refusing to see that a code of behaviour which has not the sanction of reason

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and yet has the support of religion, must result in the creation of irreconcilable divisions between men. In reason alone, can we have our common meeting ground."

Rabindranath cannot believe in the efficacy of the doctrine that Hindu-Moslem differences are to be composed merely for the sake of political statecraft. "To me the mere political necessity is unimportant ; it is for the sake of our humanity, for the full growth of our soul that we must turn our mind towards the ideal of the spiritual unity of man". So Rabindranath laying special stress on the strength of Hindu-Moslem friendship says :—

"Let us announce to the world that the light of the morning has come not for entrenching ourselves behind barriers but for meeting in mutual understanding and trust on the common field of co-operation ; never for nourishing a spirit of rejection but for that glad acceptance which constantly carries us itself the giving out of the best that we have".

The vision of India at peace, growing in fullness of heart but not crippled by any

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differences is the contribution of Rabindranath.<sup>1</sup> A nation, infected by internal dissensions is like a building whose mortar has been changed to sand. It stands precariously, so we are to keep ourselves straight and erect first. In our weakness lies the strength of the British. Rabindranath does not seem to believe in the theory that we shall be in a position to heal our differences, if we get self-rule first. He goes the other way and says that self-rule will never be a gift and as such we can never wrest an inch of right, unless we compose our differences. The virtues which are necessary in a fight with the alien ruler can never be cultivated, if we allow our differences to grow in volume. Attainment of freedom is not a child's play—so it can never be had by mere patchwork. In a period of epidemic, there is no good discussing the abstract principles of sanitation. Rabindranath does not support the idea of

1. Mr. Wells says:—"Do not let differences of accent and idiom annoy you. Many great movements have been crippled, many great opportunities lost by the minor spites of the elect. Vindictive self-assertion is an invariable characteristic of the hopelessly damned. Watch your-self for the minutest first speck of this leprosy".

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shirking the problem. He tells us to face it boldly and straightly and we sensitive people are always shy at straight talks. Our politicians have been trained in the game of bluff, as a result of which the most important problem remains unsolved. The Poet has incurred the wrath of those politicians who are ready to welcome everything except truth because they trade on lies. Rabindranath told nothing but truth, when he discussed the "way to unity":—

"The true way to maintain a harmonious unity is by according due respect to the true distinctness of the different parts. The artificial consolidation of the mangled in spirit, the crippled in life, the dependent and the hard-pressed can only remain a jumble of incongruous parts. At the period of the swadeshi movement in Bengal, we experienced a desire to make the Moslems one with ourselves but we did not succeed in doing so. Doubtless a coalition with them would have been very convenient for it to be feasible. If there are differences between Hindu and Moslem which are real, they cannot be spirited away by jugglery. If in our anxiety

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to secure some convenience, we ignore the facts, the facts will ignore our convenience. We failed because the invitation which we extended to the Moslem was for serving a purpose, not because it was inevitable, as is the invitation of mutual good feeling in common service ..... Peace between the two sections of the population can only be had either through apathy and forgetfulness or through fear of foreign rule and common hatred against it. They may form an alliance for some such immediate object of mutual self-interest but these alliances like political alliances between countries are not only transitory but in constant danger of ending in violent reaction.”

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“Truth consists not in facts but in harmony of facts”.

—Rabindranath.

## CHAPTER V.

### IDEALS OF EDUCATION.

INDIA is seething with discontent. We are disgusted with the existing ways of the world and more so, with ourselves. That shows that wrong is not in the world but in our mind. Mind—healthy, strong and robust—can endure or cure many of the ills that the world is heir to but if the mind be diseased and stunted, there is no way out except screaming for help which is never doled out to the undeserving. We feel that we are passing our days but we do not grow ; we read but do not learn ; we attain success in examination but not in life ; we come out of the arena of the University in this ampitheatre of life only to die in anguish and sorrow but not to enjoy life. We drudge and drudge on but can never experience joy of work and existence. What is wrong ? What are we drifting to ?

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The fundamental factor contributing to this moribund state of affairs is that our development is stunted by untoward circumstances and the tragedy can to some extent be mitigated if we know how to train ourselves. This is a question which in spite of its paramount importance has failed to attract our closest attention but that is the only remedy of the ills we suffer from. The Government are scandalously negligent and the people coldly indifferent. There are occasional cries of "more light" and "more grants" which mark the limit of our propaganda for education. But we do not know education in its real sense. Our boys grow into youth and from youth into manhood only to suffer defeat in the struggle of life ; we never care for their nourishment and as a result, their minds remain undeveloped and therefore unsuited to the conditions of modern life. They wend their weary ways only to be crumbled in the rock of life.

Truth is that we have no ideals. We have fallen from whatever we had. A structure is not known by its massiveness but by its perfection, the stability of a building rests

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on that of basis. When people are feeling that the education imparted to us is not only imperfect but positively harmful, I would like to state in the following pages what Rabindranath has given us as his ideals of education. I have confidence that a scrutiny of Rabindranath's ideals and suggestions will go a great way in dispelling the hazy ideas that abound the brains of our leaders and educationists. Without unnecessary comments, I would like to state what the Poet has thought of the ideals of education and our educationists might profitably take some hints from the master-mind. It would be only an evidence on our narrowness if we brush aside his ideals as mere dreams ; for Rabindranath besides being a poet is a great constructive thinker and if there are only a few men to project his "dreams" into realities, a period of quick renaissance will stabilize our development in the right direction.

### **Child's Education.**

Even in his boyhood Rabindranath protested against "the tight-fitting encasement

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of the school which being like the shoes of mandarin women pinched and bruised my nature." Training from childhood should begin in an atmosphere, free, sympathetic and suggestive. Emphasising the need of education in a free atmosphere, the Poet says :—"The young mind should be saturated with the idea that it has been born in a human world which is in harmony with the world around it. And this the regular type of school ignores with an air of superior wisdom, severe and disdainful. It forcibly snatches away children from a world full of the mystery of God's own handiworks, full of the suggestiveness of personality. It is a mere method of discipline which refuses to take into account the individual. It is a manufactory specially designed for grinding out uniform results for, according to the school, life is perfect when it allows itself to be treated as dead, to be cut into symmetrical conveniences."

We do not make room for joy in education. That is a great need. Man's religion is never confined within the bounds of necessity. Boys should be allowed to read something

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which is not necessary from the worldly point of view. But our system of education stands in the way. We think it a waste of time, for boys to read out-books for pleasure. But dull necessity is never creative. So boys read, they pass but they never learn. They suffer under the heavy load of syllabus and the so-called discipline chills their enthusiasm. They are piling bricks but they are not building. In a graphic description of a class-room, the Poet says :—“It is just at this critical period that the child’s life is brought into the educational factory—lifeless, colourless, dissociated from the context of the universe, within bare white walls staring like eyeballs of the dead. We had the God-given gift of taking delight in the world but such delightful activity was fettered and imprisoned, stilled by a force called discipline which kills the sensibility of the child mind, the mind which is always on the alert, restless and eager to receive first hand knowledge from Mother Nature. We had to sit inert, like dead specimens of some museum whilst lessons were pelted at us from as high like hailstones on flowers.”

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Our school education is defective for three reasons :—

- (1) Medium of instruction in foreign tongue.
- (2) Books on foreign subjects.
- (3) Teachers in our lower classes are not well-educated.

If the boys would have learnt Bengalee, they could have at least read the Ramayan and the Mahabharat. If they were not trained in school at all, they could have at least played. But our boys receive neither education nor play. They learn neither Bengalee nor English. So they cannot produce or create, they can only imitate and blind imitation does never bring out the potentialities in man. The result is that most of our youngmen grow and live in “inverted commas”.

Our school curriculum includes books on foreign subjects which do not at all appeal to the learners. Thus education has no relation to national life. There is a palpable divorce of education from life. Boys perpetually live in contradistinction to whatever they learn. The result is dissatisfaction and stunted or

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parasite growth. So it will be easily seen that the vital need of the hour is co-ordination of education and life which can only be done through Bengalee language and Bengalee literature. We have both but we are not utilising them. Dead to all primary needs, we are not living our lives but only passing our dark days of the present with a darker future ahead.

Referring to the present day school-teachers, the Poet says :—“School-masters fill every moment with tasks, with discipline and rules. So their life becomes a solid thing, one hard lump of lessons without any space for the poor cramped mind to find its outlet of energy.”

As distinguished from the above, the Poet clearly lays down the “*sine quo non*” of ideal teachers. “Teachers should not” he maintains “be a mere vechicle of text-books. They must make their teaching personal. They must take intense interest in life, in ideals, in everything around them, in the boys who come in contact with them”. They must feel in their blood “the unseen messages of nature travelling through space, floating in the roots of the grass under the earth”. Lessons should

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come from a living teacher who can inspire, enthuse and touch the mind—not from textbooks, which invariably cramp the brain.

This ideal of the Poet materialised in his own school at Bolpur—"I wanted to make these children happy in an atmosphere of freedom. I never cared to watch them too much, to distrust them. I did not keep an eye on their conduct. I never suspected them. Even when they took their examination I trusted them and when I gave freedom, I found my own freedom through trust, through my faith in human nature and child nature."

In his own inimitable way, the Poet unfolds his mind on the object of education.<sup>1</sup>--"I believe the object of education is the freedom of mind

1. Education may be viewed from many points of view—that of the state, of the church, of the schoolmaster, of the parent or even of the child itself. Each of these points of view is partial. Each contributes something to the ideal of education but also contributes elements that are bad. Educational authorities do not look on children as human beings with souls to be saved. They look upon them as material for grandiose social schemes, future hands in factories or bayonets in war or what not. No man is fit to educate unless he feels each pupil an end in himself, with his own rights and his own personality, not merely a piece in a jig-saw puzzle or a soldier in a regiment or a citizen in a

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which can only be achieved through the path of freedom, though freedom has its risk and responsibility as life itself has. They should not have more schools for their lessons but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love. It must be an Ashram where men have gathered for the highest end of life, in the peace of nature, where life is not merely meditative but fully awake in its activities, where boys' minds are not being perpetually drilled into believing that the ideal of self-idolatry of the nation is the truest ideal for them to accept, where they are bidden to realise man's world as God's kingdom to whose citizenship they have to aspire, where the sunrise and sunset and the silent glory of stars are not daily ignored, where nature's festivities of flowers and fruits have their joyous recognition from man, and where the young and the old, the teacher and the student, sit at the same table to partake of their daily food and the food of their eternal life."

state. Reverence for human personality is the beginning of wisdom in every social question but above all in education."

Bertrand Russel.

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The Poet is an ardent lover of this forest sanctuary because “it blossomed in India like its own lotus under a sky generous in its sunlight and starry splendour.”

The highest education is that which does not merely endow us with information but brings our life in tune and harmony with all existence. Boys must have a relation and touch with nature. We have no right, says the Poet, “to rob the child of his earth to teach him geography, of language to teach him grammar.” There should be no artificial cover over the body which must draw juice from ground, air, water etc. The Poet is of opinion that boys up to 7 years need not be dressed and need not be ashamed also. It has a two-fold advantage. First, the idealisation of poverty “as it is the school in which man had his first lessons and his best training” and secondly, his relation with nature, because “boys must gather knowledge through their love of life”. The school has not the completeness of the world. It is a special arrangement for giving lessons. Students must be brought up in an atmosphere of living aspiration to higher things “not in the

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academic atmosphere of scholarship or learning or in the maimed life of monastic seclusion." The ultimate object of education is to give man "the unity of truth."

Our educationists labour under the misconceived notion that it is always impertinence for boys to be boys, with a "charte blanche" to freedom of movement. Such a ridiculous conception is responsible for chilling the enthusiasm of our nation in the bud. Regarding this important aspect of education, the Poet is quite clear and emphatic."—"In proper schools, boys must behave as if they were not boys, they must never be boisterous, they must not laugh too loud. But boys are born savages and must pass through the stage of savageness. I let them run and climb and swing and when the rain fell, go out and get thoroughly drenched in the open air. I waited the poor boys to realise that they had been made to be boys at least for 14 or 15 years of their life."

Emphasising the need of religious education, the Poet says :—"Religion is not a fractional thing that can be doled out in fixed weekly

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or daily measures as one among various subjects in the school syllabus. It is the truth of our complete being, the consciousness of our personal relationship with the Infinite, it is the true centre of gravity of our life. This we can attain during our childhood by daily living in a place where the truth of the spiritual world is not obscured by a crowd of necessities assuming artificial importance, where life is simple, surrounded by fullness of leisure, by ample space and pure air and profound peace of nature and where men live with a perfect faith in the eternal life before them."

Poet loves the children intensely. So he is very keen about their proper education :— "Let me tell you (children) once again that my heart dwells with the young and I feel grateful to them for bringing new hopes, generation after generation, to the world of man."

### College and University Education.

Our University education is radically wrong. The fundamental defect in our system is that we are not educated to know ourselves.

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Arrangements have not been made for knowing India, her history, philosophy, literature, art and religion. The syllabus does not provide any scope for special interest in things Indian. But it is the bounden duty of each race to keep alight its own lamp of mind. Unfortunate is the nation that has no light but more unfortunate is the one that having it has forgotten all. India has a culture of her own. India has her mind. The best education for India is to enable the mind of India to find out this truth. There is no university in India where Indian mind can be known. "Educational institutions in our country are India's alms-bowl of knowledge ; they lower our intellectual self-respect ; they encourage us to make a foolish display of decoration composed of borrowed feather." The result is we reproduce—but we do not produce. The present system of education does not help boys to think for themselves. They are trained to obey blindly—not to develop individually. Such obedience though extolled as bond of rule does not lead to any ultimate good. The morphia of obedience is being administered on so liberal a scale that we cannot

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on leaving the university recover individuality and free thinking.

The spring-force of education has been to gain, not to grow. Consequently, these three things are necessary :—

First, the mind of India is to be focussed on and made conscious of itself, as a preliminary to education.

Secondly, in education, the important factor is the atmosphere of creative activity. Full scope must be given for the work of intellectual exploration and creation. “Education can only become natural and wholesome when it is the direct fruit of a living and growing knowledge.”

Thirdly, education must be in complete touch with our life, economical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual. “True education is to realise at every step how our training and knowledge have organic connection with our surroundings.”

None of the above factors count in our education. So we are thoroughly disgusted with it. We desire a wholesome change. Popular control over education is not all. Poet does not fall in with the idea that

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the D. P. I. will control our education. Imposition of too much discipline is equally harmful. Poet quotes Tolstoy to prove the harmful effects of state interference.<sup>1</sup> "It seems to me that it is now specially important to do what is right quietly and persistently, not only without asking permission from the Government but consciously avoiding its participation. The strength of the Government lies in the people's ignorance and the Government knows this and will therefore always oppose true enlightenment. It is time we realised this fact. And it is most undesirable to let the Government, while it is spreading darkness, pretend to be busy with the enlightenment of the people. It is doing this now by means of all sorts of pseudo-educational establishment which it

1. Almost all education has a political motive ; it aims at strengthening some group, national, religious or even social in competition with other groups. It is this motive in the main which determines the subjects taught, the knowledge offered, and the knowledge withheld and expected to require. Hardly anything is done to foster the inward growth of mind and spirit ; in fact, those who have had most education are very often atrophied in their mental and spiritual life, devoid of impulse, and possessing only certain mechanical aptitudes which take the place of living thought."—Bertrand Russel.

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controls—schools, high schools, Universities, academics and all kinds of committees and congresses..... It is strange to see good, wise people spending their strength in a struggle against Government.”

State-controlled and, in our case, bureaucracy-ridden education cannot but starve the mind of the nation. Our educational institutions are only nurseries for slaves.<sup>1</sup> “We pass our examinations and shrivel up into

1. The system of education is defective and its effects not wholesome :—

“Did much knowledge and piercing intelligence suffice to make men good, then Bacon should have been honest and Napoleon should have been just.....It is indeed strange that with the facts of daily life before them in the street, in the country house and the family, thinking men should expect education to cure crime”  
—Herbert Spencer.

“I do not care that children as a rule should learn either reading or writing, because there are very few people in this country who get any good by either”—Ruskin.

“Books are good enough in their way but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life”—Stevenson.

“Educated the children are not, they are pressed through “standards” which exact a certain acquaintance with A. B. C. and pothooks and figures but educated they are not in the sense of the development of their latent capacities so as to make them capable for the discharge of their duties in life”—Gen. Booth.

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clerks, lawyers and police inspectors and we die young." And what is the merit of an examination ? "It is a deliberate cultivation of disloyalty to truth, of intellectual dishonesty, of a foolish imposition by which "the mind is encouraged to rob itself." As a result, our educated community is not a cultured community but a community of qualified candidates.<sup>1</sup> We have no culture to smoothe our relation

"Alas ! I have explored  
Philosophy and Law and Medicine,  
And over deep Divinity have pored  
Studying with ardent and laborious zeal,  
And here I am at last, a very fool,  
With useless learning curst,  
No wiser than at first"—Goethe's Faust.

1. Re : bookish education, Prof. Slater says :—

"Yesterday I happened to look into a book about my native country of Devonshire by the well-known novelist Mr. Baring Gould. He describes how he went into a school nestling below the hills of Dartmoor with His Majesty's Inspector. First, the Inspector asked the children questions. He asked them to name the rivers of Siberia and they did. He asked them to name the highest mountain of Africa and they did. He asked them to give the height of the highest mountain of Africa and they did. And the Inspector was pleased. Then Mr. Baring Gould asked questions. He asked them to give the name of the river which flowed through their village and they could not. He asked them to give the name of the hill that overhung the valley and they could not.

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with the world around, and broaden our outlook, to help us in creation and show the way to grow. Our education is not creative, it does not provide us with any mental sustenance.

When we want to reform our education, it is not enough to see that there should be more popular representatives in the Senate. When we want to organise a University, the idea of a full-grown European University looms large before our mind. We forget that their Universities keep pace with the growth of their nations and those are organic parts of the lives of Europe. "To make the paraphernalia of our education so expensive that education itself becomes difficult of attainment would be like squandering all one's money in buying money-bags." We must be simple and start a simple centre of learning. We must substitute a new system for the European system. We should not imitate, because our mind is not Western, but essentially Eastern.

He asked them the name of a common flower he had picked in the lane and no one knew it. "This," he cried, "is the rubbish which we inflict on the children and call education."

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There are two defects under which we are labouring and we have to eradicate them wholly.

### *(I) Medium of Foreign Language.*

For the perfect irrigation of learning, foreign language cannot be a true channel. First, it is a waste of time. Secondly, it is difficult to accommodate English in our minds. Thirdly, there is hardly any competent Bengali teacher with a proper grounding in English. Fourthly, it is a terrible waste of national material to cut off all higher educational facilities from the thousands of pupils who have no gift of acquiring a foreign tongue but who nevertheless possess the intellect and desire to learn. Fifthly, the cost we pay to our alien ruler is the sacrifice of our own knowledge and culture upon which depends the salvation of motherland for all time to come.

Different languages of India should not deter us from the adoption of mother-tongue as the medium of education. In Europe, there was Latin first, the only language for education, just like Sanskrit in ancient India.

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But latterly every country developed in its own way and thus the contributions of Europe were varied and unique. The Poet says :—"The diversity of our languages should not be allowed to frighten us ; but we should be warned of the futility of borrowing the language of our culture from a far-way land, making stagnant and shallow that which is fluid near its source."

### (II) *No Good Teacher.*

We have no human teacher. Poet in his own inimitable style voices forth the grievance :—"To our misfortune, we have in our country all the furniture of the European University except the human teacher. We have instead merely purveyors of book-lore in whom the paper-god of the book-shop seems to have made himself vocal. And as a natural result, we find our students to be untouchables even to our Indian professors. These teachers distribute their doles of mental food, gingerly and from a dignified silence, raising walls of note-books between themselves and their students. This kind of food is neither relished nor does it give nourishment.

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It is a famine ration strictly regulated to save us not from emancipation but only from absolute death. It holds out no hope of that culture which is far in excess of man's mere necessity. It is certainly less than enough and far less than a feast."

We should also shift our attention to the three aspects of education—cultural aspect, aesthetic aspect and economic aspect.

In our centre of Indian learning, we must provide for the co-ordinated study of all these different cultures—the Vedic, the Puranic, the Budhist, the Jain, the Islamic, the Sikh and the Zorastrian. And side by side with them, the European—otherwise we would not be in a position to assimilate the last. Unless we have a proper grounding in Indian culture, we are likely to be carried away the impetuous rush of Western culture.

There are some people, intoxicated with the wine of modernism, who believe that our past is bankrupt, "leaving no assets for us but only legacy of debt." Blessed they are in their ignorance. Referring to these vaunted people, the Poet says:—"It is well to remind them that the great ages of renaissance in

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history were those when men suddenly discovered the seeds of thought in the granary of the past. The unfortunate people who have lost all the harvest of their past have lost their present age. They have missed their seeds for cultivation and go a-begging for their bare livelihood. The time has come for us to break open the treasure grove of our ancestors and use it for our commerce of life. Let us with its help make our future our own—never continue our existence as the eternal rag-picker at the other people's dustbins."

The aesthetic aspect is not cared in our present system of education. Culture thus becomes narrow and life mutilated. Music and art are the highest means to national expression. Without them, the people would remain inarticulate. The Poet says :—"In the proposed centre of our culture, music and art must have their prominent seats of honour, not merely a tolerant nod of recognition. The different systems of music and different schools of art which lie scattered in the different ages and different provinces of India and in the different strata of society, have

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to be brought there together and studied. Thus a real standard of aesthetic taste will be formed by the help of which our own art of expression will grow in strength and riches enabling us to judge all foreign arts with the soberness of truth and appropriate from them ideas and forms without incurring the charge of plagiarism."

The Poet complains that we have known the West where it is learned, masterful and powerful but not where it is artistically creative. That is the reason why modern Europe has not been revealed to us in complete personality. Europe has only touched our intellect—not our heart. Heart finds expressions only in creation—not in scholarship. It is an evidence of culture if we learn to prize the artists more than the scholars. Unhappily, we are moving the other way about which means a sad and serious reflection on our education and incidentally on our educationists.

The Poet says that we cannot afford to be Western. Eastern mind is there, "it is in your blood, in the marrow of your bones, in the texture of your flesh and in the tissue

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of your brains". So the idea of an Eastern University is in the Poet's mind. Therefore he says that our centre of culture should also be the centre of our economic life. It must cultivate land, breed cattle, to feed itself and its students ; it must produce all necessary accessories devising the best means and using the best materials, calling science to its aid. "In a word, it should be a complete world in itself, self-sustaining, independent, rich with ever-renewing life, radiating light across space and time, attracting and maintaining round it a planetary system of dependent bodies, imparting life-breath to the complete man ; who is intellectual as well as economic, bound by social bonds and aspiring towards spiritual freedom."

### Culture International

Culture is international in character. The East has a culture of her own. Therefore, East for its own sake and for the sake of the world must not remain unrevealed. Hitherto, the meeting of the East and West has remained incomplete because occasions thereof have not been disinterested. For the

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sake of culture, we would make some arrangements for a common meeting ground—where we can be free from the subterfuge of conflicting interests. This is the age of co-ordination and co-operation. “The seedlings that were reared within narrow plots must now be transplanted into open fields . . . . We may hug our holy aloofness from some imagined security of a corner but the world will prove stronger than our corner and it is our corner which will have to give way receding and pressing against its walls till they burst on all sides.” The key-note of age is the adjustment of knowledge through comparative study. There should be no distrust of foreign culture because of foreign character.

It is high time that India must base her own structure on a synthesis of different cultures. “My suggestion is that we should generate somewhere a centripetal force which will attract and group together from different parts of our land and different ages all our own materials of learning and thus create a complete and moving orb of Indian culture.” India shall have to assert, otherwise, the

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“whole world will grow into an exaggerated West and such an illimitable parody of the modern age will die, crushed beneath its own absurdity.” We must not be merely hangers-on of world-culture. We must unfold our own culture. “We must know that this concentration of intellectual forces of the country is the most important mission of a University, for it is like the nucleus of a living cell, the centre of the creative life of the national mind.”

The Poet himself has started a University on his own ideals. It indicates the direct attempt to prove that we are not born to be serfs, “permanently bending under the burden of another’s intellectual acquisitions.” The ideals of the Poet’s University (Bolepur Viswa-Bharati University) are :—

To study the Mind of Man is its realisation of different aspects of truth from diverse points of view.

To bring into more intimate relation with one another, through patient study and research, the different cultures of the East on the basis of their underlying unity.

To approach the West from the standpoint of such a unity of the life and thought of Asia.

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To seek to realise in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace through the establishment of free communication of ideas between the two hemispheres.

The Viswa-Bharati and its success as a centre of international culture are better known to the world than I can hope to describe.

The Poet realises the need of a University for women. They must have a centre of their own. In his recent Vancouver tour, the Poet is said to have told an interviewer :— “Now I have one dream before me. It is to establish a University for women in India. I believe that the women have peculiar gifts that must be developed in their own University. And unless the women of the world can create as much as do men, they inevitably hold men also backwards.”

## CHAPTER VI.

## **POET OF PATRIOTISM.**

Thy feet our offerings in homage to thee.  
The strength of body that we possess,  
The devotion of mind that we have,  
The faith in religion that we profess—we offer  
Thee all and life itself in supreme dedication."

—Rabindranath.

**P**OET occupies a large space in national life. We might scorn him as a dreamer but it is the dreamer who builds. Poet's vision soars high and he sings songs which purge

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the country of all that is gross and urge the people to take up the work of motherland in right earnest. National struggle is nothing but a passage of ideas from theory to practice. Therefore the visionaries and dreamers who are responsible for the growth of such ideas are the real prime movers. It is a common knowledge that Reformation follows in this wake of Renaissance. Mazzini, the dreamer, was needed before Gariboldi, the active power, came into the field. French philosophers did their work and French Revolution came as a matter of course. Russian literature gave out the untold miseries of the peasants which in turn found expression in Bolshevism or Menshevism.

In Bengal, Rabindranath has played a great part in the unfolding of our national potentialities. He has made the Bengalees articulate and he has made them awake to the situation all around. His writings breathe intense love for the country. He is a true poet of patriotism. He loves his country intensely. He is an ardent admirer of the country which has nursed him and he has known and served his country to the

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best of his capacity. His writings and poems have moved the Bengalees and they are feeling equal warmth for their country. Rabindranath's writings have worked miracles. His poems and songs are so popular in Bengal that they are in the lips of every child. Thus from childhood up, the children of Bengal nursed by the poems and songs of Rabindranath learn to love their country. Mother India, free, happy, rich, resplendent in her glory, as portrayed by Rabindranath, is the dream of every Bengalee. Rabindranath inspires Bengalees in their work, enthuses them in their love and teaches them to forget their selves in their services. The cultured community of Bengal is the product of Rabindranath's writings that have raised Bengal, nay India, in the estimation of the world. His ardent patriotism and intense love of the country well out from the core of his heart, unsoiled and unsullied by blind vision and selfish consideration. He sings of the glories of India before the proud and mighty world ; he does not feel ashamed therefor. He is not one of those treacherous bands who consider it derogatory

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to proclaim that they are the children of the unfortunate Mother India. Rabindranath feels it a proud privilege that he was born in India. He does not hide the inglorious fact that his country is dependent; it is his pleasure to do his best for the breaking of shackles of slavery. In the plenitude of love for his country, he sings of freedom which might break the trance of the enthralled nation. He refuses to be bound down by iniquities and injustice, he exhorts all to keep aloft the banner of Truth and Justice in scorn of all consequences. He is a fighting thinker. He is never prepared to compromise with untruth. He is ready either to go down under the weight of injustice and untruth, or to come out victorious and triumphant. Truce with anything mean and inglorious is not in his blood. His songs gush out like torrents breaking down all that is gross, never taking into account the impediments that stand in the way. He is ready to come out even if the night is dark and seas are rough. His songs would encourage every traveller, his writings would appreciate every such fighter.

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Rabindranath loves India with the warmth and romance of a bride. He finds pleasure in proclaiming it :—

“Blessed my life is that I was  
                                  born in this country,  
Fortunate I am that I could love you,  
                                  my Mother.”

These two lines reveal a soft corner in his heart. When Mother India is being misrepresented and caricatured at the hands of others, Rabindranath says without blush it was his fortune that he was born here in India, “a land of scorn and rebuff.” Shame to those who disown their mother under unfavourable circumstances. Rabindranath goes further and says that Mother India is not unfortunate. She has a rich civilisation to boast of, she has a beautiful landscape which is the envy of others. Our Motherland is beautiful and joyous, charming and delightful, lovely and affectionate.

“Ye, the enchanter of the world’s mind,  
Ye, the land ablaze with pure rays of the sun,  
Thy feet are washed away by the blue river,

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Then he proclaims :—

"In thy sky broke the first dawn,  
In thy "tapoban" was first heard the  
sound of "shyam",  
In thy forests and homes was first  
proclaimed Knowledge and Religion.

Rabindranath is not unmindful of the glories of India's past. He knows that the past was very rich. India was the cradle of all civilisations. Here in India, the sages of old learnt many things and taught many things. Here in the hermitage the Brahmin sages gave free education for the sake of service to humanity and disciples in their turn loved and served their 'gurus', the relationship existing between them was personal and human—not mechanical. Here in India, the sages found out the Hindu system of thought and philosophy which is highly analytical and metaphysical. Here in India, the sublime ideals of the Upanishads were prea-

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ched. Here in India, the ideals of sacrifice, love and service were extolled and given due prominence in individual lives. India's kings protected the subjects, there was no idea of exploitation, no demoralisation. The whole machinery, political, societal and economical, was arranged in a way which suited the interests of all. India thus enjoyed this high order of living and thinking when the Saxons were travelling in the forests of Germany, unsuited to any high order of civilisation. Rabindranath preached that glorious fact with all intensity in his trenchant utterance :—‘ In thy sky broke the first dawn.’

The natural beauty of Bengal has a superb fascination for the Poet, the children of the soil claim the greatest respect from him. The banks of the Ganges, “soft” breeze, open fields, thick shades of trees, the little villages which are snug nests of peace, and calm deep water of pond, play-houses of cow-boys, sweet bonds of affection, the brides, (whose hearts are full of honey) carrying water in their jars—all these peculiarly of Bengal appeal to the Poet intensely. He is in love with Bengal. As he thinks of Mother Bengal, his heart trembles

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and tears trickle down his eyes. And he breaks out in song ;—

“Oh Mother, in the month of Agrahayan,<sup>1</sup>

I have enjoyed sweet smile in thy fields,  
Oh Mother, in the month of Falgun,<sup>2</sup> the scent  
of thy mango-grove always makes me mad.”

Before Mother Bengal, rich in beauty of nature, the Poet bows down and says :—

“Obeisance to thee, Bengal. Oh my beautiful Motherland.”

And he sings :—

“Bengal, my own golden native land !

I love thee.

Thy sky and thy breeze fill my soul with  
raptures of music.”

(Translated by U. N. Sen)

Rabindranath then prays :—

“This earth of Mother Bengal and her waters,  
Her atmosphere and her vegetation—blessed  
be all, oh Lord !

1 Corresponding to November and December.

2 Corresponding to February and March.

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The vows of Bengalees and their hopes, their  
Words and their deeds—fruitful be all,

oh Lord !

(Translated by U. N. Sen)

Such a prayer at the footstool of the Almighty shows the Poet's warm heart and intense affection. Bengal is falling on evil days—she is never earnest when she talks, and she is not united when she works. She is passing her days with no end in view. That tragic fact has touched the Poet. So he prays before Heaven in order that her weakness might be cured and a nobler Bengal might come into being.

To his mind, our Mother is ever ready to minister to our comforts and remove our wants. Rabindranath gives an incisive picture of the affection of Mother Bengal :—

“Oh Mother Bengal ! Thou Incarnation of Grace Divine !

Thy commons and thy riverbanks, thy rural huts surrounded by mango-groves—everywhere and in everything that is visible, thou art carrying on thy numerous functions day and night smilingly and with superb deftness.

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Thou knowest not or knowing thou heedest not that in this wide world, thy sons have no charge.

In the midst of thy unremiting toil, thou keepest watch by their bedside like a guardian Angel.

Thou art patient and thou forgivest.

Thy serene eyes radiate blessings throughout thy land and the incisive vision of this tender self-obsession fills my eyes with grateful tears and I bow down my head in obeisance to thee !

(Translated by U. N. Sen.)

So Rabindranath respectfully requests Mother Bengal :—

“Oh Mother, release us from this blind bondage of delusion.

In the prison of thy affection, do not keep the watchful guards always waiting only to enchain your sons for eternity.

With thy ever-crying, ever-hungry heart, shouldst thou always surround thy sons with anxious arms of shelter ?

Art thy sons only parts of thee and nothing more—not of themselves, of the world, of the God of universe ?

Thy sons, oh Mother, art not thy property.”

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The picture drawn by the above lines is tragic and cruelly correct. That shows where and what is Bengal. He has spotted out Bengal's weakness and attacks it relentlessly. Much too affection makes the boy useless. He receives no training and in hour of need, he cannot be expected to do anything. Mother's affection is all right but the children should not sit idle in the lap of affection. They must exert themselves and pave their own way. In the world of competition, the trophy is for the best runner ; the prize is for him who is ready to pass through adversity. The world is not a bed of roses, the idle and inactive must go down. So Rabindranath says :—

“Allow thy sons to be Men in sin and sorrow, in happiness and adversity, in rise and fall.

Oh Affectionate Mother Bengal ; do not keep us as children for all time to come in thy hearth.

Allow us to seek out our respective places in countries, far and near.

Don't bind our every step by the chain of restriction and make us “good” boys.

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Allow us to put up a fight with good or evil and in the fight, let us sacrifice our lives, and suffer adversity.

By taking hold of thy withered, honest, good boys, throw them beyond the range of the house and make them wild.

Oh fascinated Mother of us all : Thou hast made thy sons—7 crores of them—mere Bengalees—not men worthy of name."

Rabindranath knows that Bengalees are stay-at-home people. They are never adventurous. Thy grow silently, they pass their days meekly and they die unnoticed. Such a mean and meek existence does not show health. They are like so many withered leaves of winter. Rabindranath wants to transform them into rich foliages of spring, green and joyous. In this wide world, the meek have no place, everything is to be wrenched by force. The weak should always suffer because the world belongs to the strong. So the Bengalees should fight out their places in the world and as such he prays to Mother Bengal to give opportunities to her children for training in the school of adversity and experience. They should be men in full sense of the term.

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Mere existence is a scandal. Life is a glory only when one learns to live. It is no credit in mastering the knowledge of dying. The world is always to be conquered for perfect possession. Inheritance does not entitle one to full possession. In these days of agnosticism and aethism, the Bengalees must prove their right to existence, otherwise they cannot survive. The universe which has accepted the doctrine, "survival of the fittest", can only appreciate those who struggle to that end. So Rabindranath in sorrow cries out :—"Thou hast made thy sons—7 crores of them—mere Bengalees, not men worthy of name". Such a penetrating insight is only possible for Rabindranath.

### A Fighting Thinker.

Rabindranath is a fighting thinker. Rabindranath feels for all, fights for all and exhorts all to float gallantly on the surface. He has taught us not to scorn the fallen and the down-trodden. He has always protested against the mal-treatment of the poor and untouchable. There is divinity in every man and it is a sacrilege to insult Man in any way. The

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Shastras and traditions which seek to show disrespect to man have always been ruthlessly attacked by him. He stands for rationality. Time-worn usages and customs do not appeal to him. He is an iconoclast in that respect. He is ready to get rid of all that is unholy. His attempt is to purge the world of impurities and injustice. He always inspires us to create a state of society which is pure, free, unfettered, rational, brooking no injustice and compromising with no untruth ; so he says :

“He who commits injustice and he who suffers injustice, both must be hated by you”.

Rabindranath belongs to humanity and he cannot see the fallen suffering under the weight of injustice at the hands of the upper Ten. He wants to educate the masses, he wants to kindle self-respect in them. As he sees merciless exploitation of the masses, his remorseful cry wells out of his large, sympathetic heart :—

“Lo ! There stand those stolid, silent figures with heads stooped so low. In their sullen, sunken face is written the tragedy of centuries. So long and only so long as life does not depart them, they, perforce, slacken their

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pace in the walk of life in the same proportion as burdens multiply.

Thereafter, they hand down the legacy of woe and suffering from generation to generation.

They do not bemoan Fate, nor do they swear in the name of God. They are impervious to offence and do not blame any man either.

They carry on their blasted existence with a handful of rice that befall their lot.

When this meagre subsistence is wrested from them, when cruel, arrogant oppressions pierce their hearts—even then they know not how to appeal for bare justice and to whom.

For once do they only raise their voice in prayer to God—the solace of the poor and then, with a heavy sigh, breathe their last in speechless agony.

These dumb, depressed and ignorant people must be endowed with education. These spent-up, withered and broken-hearted men must be rejuvenated with hope.

Must call them round and say—"For once lift up heads together and stand united. Behold ! The one that you are afraid of is

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personified Injustice and cannot hold the ground against your united front.

The moment you arise from your slumber, he will disappear from the scene. The moment you stand before him, he will take to heels, frightened and abashed, like so many dogs on the wayside.

Remember that Heaven does not help him and he has no allies.

His parade of power is only on the surface and he knows his own shallowness within".

(Translated By U. N. Sen)

Our society must accommodate all. Rabindranath says that the countrymen have no right to oppress others ; when they do it, they simply bring curse to the land. Untouchability is eating into the vitals of Hindu society. The spirit of isolation and negligence breeds germs which decompose the fabric of the society. Man is not to be known by the badge of caste. It is the merit that counts. Moreover, the society depends on the labours of all, it cannot ignore and neglect any one section. Untouchability does not only affect the untouchables, but it also corrodes the

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upper class. Their minds become narrow, their character does not develop in broad outlook and their manhood cannot blossom in fulness. Cursed is the land which has harboured the problem of untouchability. The idea of one united nationhood cannot then embrace all and unfortunate is the land where the malign influence of untouchability predominates to a great extent. The Poet says :—

“Oh my unfortunate Motherland ! those whom you have insulted would drag you down on their same level.

Those whom you have deprived of the rights of humanity would bring you down to their same status.

By avoiding the touch of man every day, you have insulted the divinity in man.

So the curse of Heaven befalls you and you perforce have to share your meal with all and sundry at the door of famine.

You cannot see that the Messenger of Death who stands at your door throws curse on the vanity of your caste.

If you avoid to embrace all and shut yourself up within the thick walls of pride,

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you would be simply courting Death which will level you all."

Thus we find one section cannot prosper at the cost of other. Such a process carries germs of fall in its train. The Poet always longs to see Motherland united. We are to consider our country as an organic whole. Division into water-tight compartments robs the country of the real strength. It has been the peculiar misfortune of India to see her forces and strength scattered and harnessing of them all into one direct action is the ambition of the Poet. "Unity is strength"—this simple truth has been disregarded by the Indians and as a result we have suffered considerably ; our growth has been stunted. So Rabindranath sings :—

"Stand up, forgetting thy own self.

Let lightening travel from heart to heart.

Break out into song, fearlessly, raising thy heads in the morning sky ;

If twenty crores of sons cry out—"Mother,"  
The whole world would tremble ;

If twenty crores of sons surround the Mother, smile would brighten up all sides."

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Thus he appeals for unity and he knows that unity can work miracles. He has stupendous faith in himself. He feels that Mother Bengal will be in a position to shake off her shackles and she will once again smile radiantly, free from bondage. He knows that if twenty crores of sons are united, no force on earth can foil their attempts for achieving freedom. Imbued with the hope of seeing Mother India free at any cost, he exhorts all to action. "Neither imagination nor dream it is,—but a truthful vision of the day that is sure to come." Vision for future makes him bolder and he declares with confidence :—

"We dead must awaken and emerge out of the meshes of fear and heaped-up abuses of life—must awaken at this hour of glorious dawn to take up our appointed place in the midst of the wide awake world.

We must boldly declare—Oh ye Gods that inhabit the earth, alike with you we are sons of the Immortal one."

(Translated by U. N. Sen)

Our eyes are blind. There are obstacles in the way of our knowledge, our work and

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our movement. We are not free in any scope. Like free birds we shall have to sing paeans of freedom, we shall have to remove darkness all around. This is not an easy task. Clouds will gather in the sky ; danger will befall us. But in the midst of thunder and storm, we are to proceed on and on.

“You are to travel single-handed.

If doors are bolted against you in a stormy and dark night, oh Unfortunate ! if lamps are not lighted, still you are to travel alone and forlorn, lighting your own heart-ribs.”

Nothing should restrain us from our onward march to reach the goal. We are now in helpless position. Our home does not exist, we are led by the frowns of others, our backbone is broken. We have accepted the rule of our shastras, we tremble at the finger-stroke of our master and we hang our heads eternally in shame before thousands. Rabindranath cannot suffer the idea that we shall remain in this hopeless position for long. So he kneels down before the Almighty and prays ;—

“Oh God, remove all kinds of unseemly fear from this unfortunate land.

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This fear of man, king and death, this merciless exploitation, this degradation, this humility in every step, the chain of slavery within and outside, this sacrifice of self-respect at the feet of thousands, this shameful state—relieve us of all these, oh God.

Allow us to lift our heads in this open sky."

### **Be Swadeshi.**

If any one is to do some good to India, he must love India. He must be a true swadeshi in words and deeds. Rabindranath has always urged us to take to swadeshi things and spurn foreign articles. Foreign dress, foreign language, foreign manner of living, mania for anything foreign—all these are reprehensible. They checkmate real growth. The more we are denationalized, the less is our chance of ever achieving emancipation. If our soul is in bondage, we cannot improve the situation in any way. By becoming anglicised, we lose much but do not gain anything. Therefore love for the country should be the dominant factor in our life. Lip-deep sympathy will not serve anything; we must be in earnest.

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It is a shameful thing that we shall approach those men for favour who are always ready to hurl insult at us. Rabindranath condemns such lamentable lack of self-respect in clear terms. So he says :—

“Our existence is a shame, poverty is in every hearth, and there is no respect to the Brahmins, because we have lost riches of our heart.

There is no meditation but only the counting of beads.

Our purity has grown into meaningless and heartless custom.

We are heaped-up rubbishes.

Our religion is without essence and it is squeezing us like a heavy burden.

We are running after the West to clothe ourselves by foreign dress.

Vain attempt, oh brother, all dresses are shameful where there is no heart.”

The vow of swadeshi must be taken by all Indians. We must be swadeshi in words, deeds, dresses and in sentiment. We must learn to prize what we have got in India. We should know how to serve our own Mother. Spurning her for a step-mother

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is foolishness. However rich and ornamented a step-mother might be, we should learn to respect our Mother, even if she is poor. We should not be dazzled by others' brilliance. We must decently bury our infatuation for the West. So Rabindranath sings :—

“I promise in the New Year that I would take initiation in swadeshi,

Oh Mother, I would accept lessons at thy feet, in thy hermitage.

I must give up foreign dresses and foreign clothes.

I may be poor but not mean, so I promise to give up begging from others.

If palaces I have none, I have huts, purified by good auspices.

Cities I have none but I have forests, variegated with fruits and flowers.

The freedom of India is Rabindranath's earnest desire. This slavery is sitting like nightmare on his breast. His vision is that India will one day occupy a honoured place in the committee of civilised nations. Moreover, Rabindranath believes, that for this starved world, India is a great need—humanity will suffer a great deal, if India go down to

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extinction. True, there will be obstruction in the way—obstruction from our own countrymen and obstruction from the Government but we shall have to overcome obstructions for the sake of reaching our desired goal. So Rabindranath sings :—

“Onward, Brethren, onward !  
What good is it to stay behind like so many dead ?

Onward, onward,  
Death would make no difference”.

Idealists and dreamers, poets and prophets, are never pessimist. Dejection is never in their blood. Rabindranath calls round the people and says :—

“Oh ye fearless Heroes ! This veil of gloom will be lifted. Only shake off your slumber, open your eyes, dismiss your dejection and Lo ! the sunshine of Hope.”

(Translated by U. N. Sen)

Obstruction has no dread for him. He is ready to throw himself headlong into the struggle, so he prays to the Lord :—

“Give me the strength to bear my joys and sorrows.

## POET OF PATRIOTISM

Give me the strength to make my love  
faithful in service,

Give me the strength never to disown the  
poor or hold knees before insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind  
high above daily trifles." (Poet's translation)

And after the struggle, he likes to see :—

"Where the mind is without fear and the  
head is held high ;

Where knowledge is free ;

Where the world has not been broken up  
into fragments by narrow domestic cells ;

Where words come out from the depth of  
truth ;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms  
towards perfection ;

Where the clear stream of reason has not  
lost its way into the dreary desert sand of  
dead habit ;

Where the mind is led forward by thee  
into ever-widening thought and action.

Into the heaven of freedom, my Father,  
let my country awake. (Poet's translation)

Rabindranath's love for Indians is a part of  
the love he bears towards men all the world  
over. His patriotism, passionate and burning,

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never caters for any mean and selfish consideration. He likes to see Mother India, free, resplendant and joyous but he does not also like to see other countries exploited and mutilated. He says :—

“The same stream of life that runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measure,

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean cradle of birth and death, in ebb and in flow.

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life.” (Poet’s translation)

So he likes India to be an ideal land—a land where injustice and conflict might not mar the human relationship. Rabindranath sings :

“O heart of music, awake in this holy place of pilgrimage,

In this land of India, on the shore of vast humanity.

Here do I stand with arms outstretch to salute man divine,

## POET OF PATRIOTISM

And sing his praise in many a gladsome  
paean.

These hills that are rapt in deep meditation,  
These plains that clasp their rosaries of  
rivers,

Here will you find earth that is ever sacred,  
In this land of India, on the shore of vast  
humanity.

We know not whence and at whose call,  
these myriad streams of men,

Have come rushing forth impetuously to  
lose themselves in the sea.

Aryan and Non-Aryan, Dravidian and Chi-  
nese,

Scythian, Hun, Pathan and Moghul, all, all  
have merged into one body.

Now the West has opened her doors, and  
they are all bringing their offering.

They will give and take, unite and be  
united, they will not turn away.

In this land of India, on the shore of vast  
humanity.

Come Aryan, Non-Aryan, Hindus, Mussal-  
mans, Come,

Come Ye Parsees, O'Christians, come Ye  
one and all.

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Come Brahmins, let your hearts be hallowed by holding all men by the hand

Come all Ye who shunned and isolated, wipe out all dishonour.

Come to the crowning of the Mother, fill the sacred bowl

With water that is sanctified by the touch of all,

In this land of India, on the shore of vast humanity.

(Translated by Indira Devi Choudhurani.)

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“You who are young belong to the great republic of man.

Like the water lily, you have your roots in the soil of your home-land, but the wealth of your flower is open to “The-All.”

You carry in your blood the call of the unattained.”

*Rabindranath.*

## CHAPTER VII.

### LAND, LABOUR AND CAPITAL.

“GROWTH is not that enlargement which is merely adding to the dimension of incompleteness. Growth is the movement of a whole towards a yet fuller wholeness. Life is a continual process of synthesis and not of additions. Our activities of production and enjoyment of wealth attain that spirit of wholeness when they are blended with a creative idea, otherwise they have the insane aspect of the eternally unfinished; they become like locomotive engines which have railway lines but no stations; which rush on towards a collision of uncontrolled forces or to a sudden breakdown of the overstrained”—with these words Rabindranath warns the insensate lovers of modern progress which is responsible for “organised

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centres of moral pollution from which a pestilence of death threatens to spread all over the world". In modern society the ideal of wholeness has lost its appeal. All different sections are detached, disenfranchised forces and irresponsible free-booters. We have forgotten that man's revelation does not lie in the fact that he is a power but he is a spirit. The society has lost harmony which is its basis and as a result "passions become violent, anti-social disorder prevails, the few destroy the substance of the many, seeking to use them as tools for their self-aggrandisement". Relationship in the modern world has been thus muddled. Utility has occupied the principal place in our endeavours. But the truth is that life is not utilitarian in spirit, its desire being for fulness. Civilisation becomes senile and moribund when it fails to create, because "all civilisations are creations. When in things which are a creation, the structure gets the better of the spirit, then it is condemned. When a civilisation merely gives a large stock of fact about its own production, then we know there must be anarchy in its world of ideas ; that some living

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part is lacking, that it will be torn with conflicts and will not be able to hold together human society in the spirit of truth". This has been the fate of the modern civilisation. It is huge in structure but the inner self is starved by famine of ideals. It has fallen from truth and as such to save itself, it is preparing for a conflict. But conflict only breeds conflict, there is no end, hence peace is not in sight. The whole structure is in a precarious position and its cracking is a question of days.

Science has raised the standard of living beyond the level of necessity and so it encourages greed thus "creating constant problems of maladjustment, whirlpools of noise, dirt and ugliness of social insanitation, of fragmentary toil that kills the rhythm of body and mind." Temptation of high-living puts no restraint on the emulation of self-indulgence. And it can be stated without any fear of contradiction that large fortunes and luxurious living "like the mountains form high walls of segregation ;" they produce divisions in the society. This urging of human mind for a gluttonous kind of living has given rise to human property. The idea of having and

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owning property is fundamental in human instinct. This property has been bitterly attacked by thinkers and propagandists from time immemorial. From Plato down to the French Revolution, it was attacked mainly on ethical grounds. In the French Revolution, it was attacked for political reasons. It was Saint Simon who first approached the question of property from the standpoint of economics. Robert Owen, Louis Blanc, Proudhon, Karl Marx etc. all were very keen on eradicating private property and prescribed various ways to deal with it. But they travelled practically on the same path that property is a theft and its existence is a menace to the society. Rabindranath has approached the question from a different standpoint. He says, first, private property can not be eradicated as the constitution of human mind which always hungers for acquisition cannot be changed. Secondly, property is not a menace but has a social value. Thirdly, extinction of property is not possible by violence. He believes that private property is not an unmixed evil and in defence he says : "Property is a medium for the expression of our personality. If we look

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at the negative aspect of this personality, we see in it the limits which separate one person from another. But its positive aspect reveals the truth that it is the only medium through which men can communicate with one another. ...If we kill our individuality because it is apt to be selfish, the human communion itself loses its meaning. But if we allow it to remain and develope, then being creative by nature, it must fashion its own world. Most often and for most men, property is the only frame that can give a foundation for such creation of a personal world. It is not merely money, not merely furniture, it does not represent merely acquisitiveness but is an objective manifestation of our taste, our imagination, our constructive faculties, our desire for self-sacrifice.....Through this creative limitation which is our personality, we receive, we give, we express ; our highest social training is to make our property the richest expression of the best in us, of that which is universal, of our individuality whose greatest illumination is love. Property is the unity of wealth that makes for communal prosperity, when it is alive to its function. Our wisdom lies

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not in destroying separateness of units but in maintaining the spirit of unity in its full strength.”

Such a brilliant and bold defence of private property would be resented by the anarchist thinkers. Rabindranath is not in company with those howlers who do not create anything except noise, and it shows his sanity and sobriety in thinking. In India, public work of the country was supported by the rich. Water-supply, medical help, education and amusement were maintained by men of prosperity. The rich served the poor “because the limits set to the individual right of self-indulgence were narrow and surplus wealth easily followed in the channel of social responsibility.” Truly Rahindranath says :—“Property was in India the pillar that supported its civilisation and wealth gave opportunity to the fortunate for self-sacrifice.” But with the onrush of modern civilisation, the rhythm of reciprocity which generates and maintains unity has been disturbed. The living relationship, sympathetic mutuality and a perfect balance of communication—all have been destroyed. Intemperance and universal

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greed have now become the ruling moods. And, as a result, "property is now intensely individualistic, it breaks all social bonds, it drains the sap of community. Its unscrupulousness plays havoc all over the world, generating forces that can coax and coerce peoples to deeds of injustice and wholesale horror."

Rabindranath recognises the unholy aspect of property. He knows that private property can be a danger to the society but that danger is to be removed, according to Rabindranath, not by eradicating private property but by reforming human mind itself. Unless the constitution of mind is changed, it is immaterial what we do with property. We shall have to fight those passions that are anti-social and keep them chained. "For attaining salvation, the individual has to destroy his self-centred egoism; so too for the acquisition of wealth for the common weal, the exclusiveness of selfish interest must be utterly destroyed." Unless we realise this truth in our life, no system, however scientific, can cure humanity of its ills. Disease is in the minds of man, so remedy

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is not in extinction of any extraneous thing. Mind is the source of all evils and the breeding ground of greed which isolates one from the other. That greed is to be controlled, if we aspire after anything higher. The epidemic of voracity must be checked. There is no good fighting with the shadow ; we shall have to go straight to the breeding ground of disease and take necessary step accordingly.

One of the worst tragedies of modern civilisation is that our life-centre has been changed from village to city. And it is the city life which has enkindled ambition, greed and luxury. It is in the city where “emulation in augmenting private possession and the enjoyment of exclusive advantage runs ahead of the common good and general happiness”, it is then only that harmony gives way and brothers separate. Village is the cradle of the race but now its resources are exploited by the city. Rabindranath says :—“From her (village) time-honoured position of the wedded partner of the city, she is degraded to that of maid servant. The city in its intense egotism and pride remains unconscious of the devastation it

constantly works upon the very source of life and health and joy." It is a tragic fact that the cities are growing at the cost of the villages. "Unlike a living heart, these cities imprison and kill the blood and create prison centres, filled with accumulation of death." Therefore the problem is to stop the exploitation of the village by the city. Rabindranath puts forth the need of reconstruction of village life when he says :— "Man has been digging holes into the very foundations not only of his livelihood but also of his life ; he is feeding upon his own body. The reckless wastage of humanity which ambition produces is best seen in villages where the light of life is being dimmed, the joy of existence dulled, the natural threads of social communication snapped everyday. It should be our mission to restore the full circulation of life's blood into those maltreated limbs of society ; to bring to the villages health and knowledge ; wealth of space in which to live ; to enjoy respect which will give them dignity ; sympathy which will make them realise their kinship with the world of men.....There can be

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no real civilisation when best ideals are concentrated in the hands of a few powerful men whilst the bulk of the population has neither leisure nor the mind to enjoy and remains desolate. In order to overcome this weakness, we have been trying to get the villagers to realise that their destiny rests in their own hands, that they must be able to think and act and gather around them those who will not look down upon them as inferiors but who will regard them as kin."

### **Machine-civilisation.**

Man is not a mere food-seeking apparatus, he has a great ideal to nurse and a truth to follow. The modern civilisation destroys the beauty of the earth because she is now ruled by machine. This machine-made man saunters about the surface of the globe uglifying the beauty and joy of the universe. Capital, the devil of the age, has caught hold of the man. In his insensate onrush of profit, he goes on multiplying wealth, the disproportionate division of which has been the bane of the

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society. "Man is not a mere living money-bag jumping from profit to profit and breaking the backbone of human races in its financial leapfrog." The monster car of organisation aided by science is throttling down life and man calls it a progress—a progress which the moderners are willing to buy at the cost of civilisation like "the man for whom wine has more attraction than food." This magnificient growth of capital is a serious menace. When it jumps up beyond the pale of necessity, it becomes anti-social and subversive. It is human instinct to desire for more. Unless it is controlled, it is bound to be disruptive. The infatuation of man for more things than necessary is suicidal for him.<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath believes in harmony and completeness in humanity "where poverty does not take away the riches, where defeat may lead him to victory and death to immortality."

Referring to the dark game that science is playing, Rabindranath says :—"Directly

1. "Never was the standard of duty lower. Never was dishonesty rifer. Never was the mania for owning things more obsessive. Never was the pursuit of pleasure more absorbing"—Edmund Holmes.

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science appeared to bless the human world, but the devil got hold of it. He is making full use of it in the shape of destructive weapons, poison gas and the engines of exploitation. Through this contact with the spirit of evil, the face of science has been distorted, its gestures have become satanic ...  
...The society which allows its needs to multiply without end must necessarily use unscrupulous means to gain its object. For though the passion of greed has no limit, human power has and this power seeks alliance with the devil whom it must have more than is normally available. It is this universal greed which is soiling science, which is making civilisation sordid."

It is the mania for profit<sup>1</sup> which has caused injustice to the world. Rabindranath in his superb style says about the havoc that greed and profit work in the universe :—

“Everywhere has the profiteer’s bushel hidden the light of the truth of the man. Man’s starved heart is being ridden to death by his corpulent pocket racing over a path

1. Craving for higher wages and less work for the sake of more sensual indulgence” —John Stuart Mill.

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of profit that has no terminus. Never in the history of the world has all-devouring avarice organised such a universal orgy for its own repletion. The passions which are the enemies of the soul work their purpose by hiding from the view the wholeness of man. Lust makes us look on the flesh to the exclusion of soul. Greed draws our attention to possessions to the exclusion of owners. Pride causes the self to ignore all others. There is one more of these enemies which is negative in its aspect—this is feebleness of vision. The mist does not destroy the landscape but wipes out its sky, shutting the Infinite out of sight. The delusion born of habit or of physical possession is a mist of the mind which beclouds the faculty of words and screens off the ineffable. It smudges the face of truth with the coarse touch of a constantly dusty use and prevents the mind from entertaining it with due regard.....This profit-making age is vulgar. It sneers but it does not know how to smile.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Industrialism is leading the man of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves. Their universal

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So Rabindranath advises us: -“Keep your faith firm in the life that creates and not in the machine that constructs—in the power that hides its force and blossoms in beauty and not in the power that bares its arms and chuckles at its capacity to make itself obnoxious. Let us know that the machine is good when it helps but not so when it exploits life; that science is great when it destroys evil but not when the two enter into unholy alliance..... It is food which nourishes—not money; it is fulness of life which makes one happy, not fulness of purpose. Multiplying materials intensifies the inequality between those who have and those who have not and this deals a fatal wound to the social system through which the whole body is eventually bled to death.”

outcry against wealth and against nobility is not forced from them either by the pressure of famine or the sting of mortified pride. These do much and have done much in villages; but the foundations of society were not yet shaken as they are at this day. It is not that men are ill-fed but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure. It is not that men are painted by the scorn of the upper classes but they cannot endure their own; for they feel that the kind of labour to which they are condemned is verily a degrading one and makes them less than men.”—Ruskin.

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Material self-seeking cannot give us a new life. It carries its own doom. In "Red Olean-ders", the Professor said about the greedy industrialised centre—"Marvellousness is the credit side of the account and the ghastliness is the debit. These small ones are consumed to ash that the great ones may leap up in flame. This is the principle underlying all rise to greatness". True, when a great industry thrives, it is reared on the blood of thousands. The world appreciates hugeness, never minding how many small things are sacrificed to make this huge organisation. "I must either gather or scatter. I can feel no pity for what I do not get. Breaking is a fierce kind of getting"—that is the voice of the Devil who is at the back of all these hideous endeavours.

### Co-Operation.

This commercialism with its barbarity of ugly decorations is a menace to all humanity, because it is setting up the ideal of power over that of perfection. The cult of self-seeking is exhibited in all its shameless nakedness in

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industrialism. According to Rabindranath, civilisation should take its firm stand upon its basis of co-operation—not upon that of economic exploitation and conflict. Whenever a man has failed to co-operate, he has been defeated. Bird or an animal leads an isolated life and that individual existence is not salutary for any healthy growth. The primary duty of civilisation is to establish inter-relation. When man has discovered this truth, civilisation has triumphed. Whenever there has been a falling off from this truth, weakness, poverty, disease, sin, strife and warfare surround us from all directions. Therefore we should learn to co-operate; selfish instincts must not be let loose to predominate. Greed isolates man—so it is the root of all evils. “Whatever is richest in man’s life comes from this mutual co-operation. Language, literature, art, knowledge, religion, the enormous richness of civilisation—all these have been possible through co-operation”. Therefore Rabindranath says that it is wise to establish the principle of co-operation in the field of the acquisition of wealth. We must direct the combined efforts of all

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to the earning of wealth for the common weal.

In the field of economics, the animal in man reigns supreme, "with teeth and claws bared in fierce struggle and relentless competition". So Rabindranath says—"Isolated disproportion of exclusive wealth is barbarous. It will become civilised when it evolves the true fulfilment of its moral character, its power of co-operation and when it grows sincerely ashamed of its iniquitous greed and of the unseemly scrimmage of competition through which one gains profit at the cost of another's loss and which with its external barriers of monstrous weight and dimensions, only serves to disturb the natural circulation of wealth and leaves the poverty problem unsolved."

### Rabindranath and Socialism.

With the remarks stated above, I like to introduce the discussion on Rabindranath and socialism. Much nonsense hinges round the question because the whole discussion has been characterised by confused thinking. We fear to assess Socialism at its true worth. We are

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generally hypnotised by the catchy phrases of the West without penetrating into their real significance. Socialism is just like the wedding cake with the Indians—it is not a thing for use but a thing to dream upon.

What is Socialism ? It is an economic interpretation of history, rather humanity. It is not a fact that Socialism is merely espousing the cause of the poor in their struggle for more concessions and comforts. Humanity demands that the poor should be taken care of. Rabindranath has always urged that the poor should be endowed with education, the depressed should be rejuvenated with hope, the down-trodden smarting under wrongs must be well-cared, the interests of the masses should be looked to and the workers should be given human treatment. Such a humanitarian and catholic attitude of mind is worthy of all great men and has been appreciated by one and all. But Socialism<sup>1</sup> is a different thing from humanity. Socialism connotes and

1. Forms of Socialism :—Scientific socialism (vide Marx, Engels) State-socialism, (Congress at Eisenach, 1872, "Verein fuer social politik), Fabianism--collective socialism (vide Sidney and Webb, Bernard Shaw), Syndicalism (vide Pelloutier, Pouget, Sorel), Guild socialism (vide

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denotes some positive things—(1) Abolition of private property, (2) Preparedness for class-warfare, (3) Advocacy of revolutionary and violent methods, (4) Raliance on the state, (5) New theory of labour value and, (6) Rule of the masses.

(I) Property cannot be eradicated, says Rabindranath. Human instinct is for acquisition. Unless one can change the constitution of mind itself, it is idle to dream that private

Orage, Hobson, Cole), Bolshevism—Maraxian socialism, Communism, (vide Lenin, Trostky), Fascism—nationalism and socialism as opposed to Commuuism and other forms of proletarianis.u (vide Musoolini, Gentile).

State-socialism, Collectivism and Solidarism are reactions against Communism and Anarchism. Syndicalism is the protest of working men as producers against all these etatism which are essentially capitalistic. Guild-socialism is as much against Collectivism as against Syndicalism. Bolshevism is a realisation of Communism en route to Anarchism. Fascism is a revolt against Bolshevism.

The nation is a unified whole :—State-socialism, Collectivism, Solidarism, Fascism.

The nation is not a single entity—there are groups, sections and classes :—Bolshevism or Communism (Morxism), Anarchism, Syndicalism, Guild-socialism.

The state is an instrument of social welfare :—State socialism, Collectivism, Solidarism, Fascism.

The state is an evil :—Communism, Anarchism, Syndicalism, Guild-socialism.

(Prof. Sarkar's "Studies In Philosophies.")

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property will be nationalised. Property is not robbery. The need is not eradication of property, but the revision of the mentality of zemindars. The landlords must take charge of the ryots. They must look to their welfare. That was the tradition of India which should be revived for healthy development of the society. Rabindranath believes if the ryots come into possession of the lands they cultivate, they will also ape the vicious ways of the zemindars. It has been a common experience that the Superintendent of Zemindary is more exacting and vindictive than the zemindar himself. The instinct of man is to be assertive and arrogant, whenever it finds an opportunity. Therefore, the remedy is to control that instinct by education. Merely a change of hands will not improve the situation. Inequality cannot be got rid of by rashness. Hysterical outburst does not create a new history. The movement of the abolition of private property is based on indignation and impatience only. That does not create anything new—that might simply destroy the existing arrangement. Bringing in millennium by eradication of private property is at best

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a "Christmas-card platitude" which has no touch with reality.

(2). Rabindranath believes that the path of human progress can never lie through an extensive class-war. We do not gain anything by class warfare. That simply decimates our respective strength. In India, especially, at a time when the whole resources of the country are to be harnessed to give battle to a third party, it is suicidal to scatter away our energies over class warfare which will never bring peace and harmony. Socialists mean by class warfare struggle between the workers and employers. Our workers are unorganised and ignorant. They are not in a position to cope with the organised strength of the employers. So class warfare will simply drive our workers to starvation. The need is to put pressure on the employers by methods other than warfare. The need is to bring the employers and workers into a bond of loyalty and service so that the one might not always strike the other. That attitude of mind must be encouraged which does not help one to be deaf to other's comforts. Indignation and impatience can construct little, they can expose much.

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(3). Violence is deprecated by Rabindranath not for the sake of violence but because it is uncreative. If labour is to be always in revolt, it is no labour at all. Breaking might give one an instant thrill but making is a long and wearisome business. Mahatma Gandhi in opposing violence says the same thing—"Labourers should fully try for their rights but in that they must observe courtesy and peace. The labourers have a right to go on a strike.....but they must not lose patience under any circumstances after going on strike. They must not intimidate those who do not join strike." <sup>1</sup>

Rabindranath has always repeated that reformation of man cannot be had by violence from without. The world will grow worse, if man himself do not grow better. The salvation is not in any system, chalked out by economists but in the hands of Man. If we want better days, breaking and violent methods

1. "The worker is now beginning to strike for unprecedented ends—against the system, against the fundamental condition of labour. The thing our society has most to fear from labour is not organised resistance, not victorious strikes and raised condition but the black resentment that follows defeat."—Mr Wells.

will not help us in any way. That might give us an infatuation but it is merely destructive. Violence for the reformation of human law is a weapon with the weak. Moreover, violence, once indulged in by a section of humanity, will pander to the baser elements of that section and even if he triumph, he will again degrade and disgrace himself by the very devilish weapon of violence whereby he improved his lot. Vice once encouraged does not stop without taking its full premium with compound compensation. "Marxism is found to work out in a ready resort to malignantly destructive activities and to be so uncreative as to be practically impotent in the face of material difficulties", so says a prominent thinker.

(4). Rabindranath's philosophy has always been "anti-statal." It is not the tradition of India to throw the burden of reform on the State. Our society solved all the problems. Socialism looks to State to take up the burden of reform ( state socialism). If we all look to State for doing everything for us, that will make us unfit for our struggle in life. Rabindranath says—"The duty of the Government

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is to enable people to remove their own obstacles and not to remove the obstacles for them. By removing opportunities, for the use of initiative, the people are left truly helpless. We should give strength to the people but never take upon us the work which should be theirs." The duty of improving one's lot must belong to himself, not to the State. Therefore reliance on the State is not a happy solution, according to Rabindranath.

(5). In the field of industry, profit and rent eat up the whole thing. Nothing is left for the workers. Rabindranath recognises the force of the argument. Socialism gives a new theory of labour value. It is the labour that counts, therefore disproportionate distribution of wealth must be stopped and labour must get its due. The real trouble is what is "due." Referring to the masses, Rabindranath says—"They have no rest in life since toil is heaped upon toil whilst fruits go to others who are cleverer. It is our idea to strengthen that life, to stimulate their intelligence and bring some joy into their existence."

(6). Rabindranath knows and believes that human future does never lie in crowd psycho-

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logy. "Minority of minds is the salt of earth", says Mr. Wells. Rabindranath has always looked to those men who would soar above community, caste or creed and work for the emancipation of the world.<sup>1</sup> Unsuccessful masses cannot create. The need of the hour is to educate labour to a high level of co-operative efficiency.

The greatest grievance of Rabindranath against Socialism is that it is uncreative. Labour is organised on the basis of greed<sup>2</sup> and hatred. The organisation is huge and monstrous but not great. To counteract the organi-

1. It is individuals who have always helped humanity. Civilisation is the creation of great individuals. It has not been created by big institutions."—Rabindranath.

2. We are better clothed than our grandfathers, we are better housed than they, we have a wider choice for consumption than they had. What then? Satisfaction? Or more hungering and thirsting? Certainly more hungering and thirsting. It is interesting as a matter of personal experience to note that the strength of Socialism is not found in the slummy and most miserable quarters in towns, but in those quarters upon which the sun of prosperity manages to shine. It is the skilled artisan, the trade unionist, the member of the friendly society, the young workman who reads and thinks, who are the recruits to the army of socialism."—Mr. Ramsay MacDonald.

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sation of capital, Labour commits the same grievous mistake against which it tries to rise. This labour organisation is barren and negative, because it ignores love, amity and peace. "Mere procession of notes does not make music ; it is only when we have in the heart of the march of sounds some musical idea, then it creates song." Labour organisation is creative only when there is human relationship. The real problem of the day is that men are being exploited. So long as men are willing to suck the life of humanity to swell up their own wealth and power, humanity will go down to its extermination. Real progress can be had only through the amelioration of the lot of individuals. How to achieve it ? Not by class warfare, not by counter-organisation based on greed and hatred, not by evolving a new system or preaching a new doctrine but by reforming Man. It is through proper guidance and education that the mind of Man can be changed and that is the remedy of all ills. "Organisation of men in machines like the West makes the situation worse because that is like the eruption of Etna tremendous in its out-burst of fire and fume but its creeping lava

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covers up human shelters made by the ages and its ashes smother life."

The real problem of the age is the problem of inequality.<sup>1</sup> Harmony has been disturbed and the great truth of union defiled. Unequal distribution of wealth is the greatest sore point of the society. Money has become a demoniac power before which larger claims of humanity have become insignificant. In suggesting remedy, Rabindranath says :— When the air is charged with the disease-germs, to kill an infected man does not drive away the disease. The remedy is not in killing the capitalist but in giving all equal opportunities of becoming capitalists. Man can rise out of the misery and conflict of inequality, if the truth of unity is also allowed to prevail in the region of economics..... Only recently man has discovered the utility of this truth in the domain of economics. This is what is known as the production of wealth by co-operation and this shows that time is not

1. All socialism involves slavery—Herbert Spencer.

"Equality is a chimera of bookworm and visionaries who have never studied nature and humanity with their own eyes."—Lord Avebury.

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distant when mammoth capital will cease to exist by splitting up into smaller units. Man will be free from the tyranny of economic inequality not by wading through blood but establishing a principle of harmony between the various units of power. That is, the principles of humanism whose absence caused such a disorder in economics are going to be recognised at last."

The real fight is with massed and congested wealth, red with aggressive inflammation. The sound process of treatment in this malady is "never through a destructive mutilation which always fails to reach the root leaving the wounds of its own making to fester but through a stimulation of the natural circulation of national prosperity, merely helping the inner spirit of recovery to do its work in the depth of social constitution." Labour constitutes the real wealth of the country. It is easy enough to compete with the rich when we can unite the labour resources of the poor. Rabindranath is of opinion that the poor have unlimited capital in their hands and by harnessing the strength of their co-operative effort, they can remove all their wants. "The

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huge megatherium of capitalism with its stupendous tail of bought-up workers will naturally become extinct when individual men come to realise their own truth not through the indecent exaggeration of their exclusive wealth but through a combination of their individuality founded upon mutual trust and understanding."

Rabindranath's own creed and faith is summed up in his own poem :—

“Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand  
before

The proud and the powerful  
With your white robe of simpleness.

Let your crown be of humility, your  
freedom

The freedom of the soul.

Build God's throne daily upon the ample  
Barenness of your poverty.

And know that what is huge is not great  
And pride is not everlasting.”

Explaining his standpoint further, Rabindranath says :—

“Those who fought in Europe have grown exhausted. They say a change in the world is

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necessary. They say, narrow patriotism, commercial rivalry do not contribute to our welfare. We shall have to expand ourselves. Let a League of Nations be built with a few first-class powers. What will the League express—man's prowess or soul? Everything depends on the solution of this question.

The religion of soul is sacrifice, not temptation. But the soul is now enveloped in the coarse canvas of civilisation—we cannot find it in the dealings of man. That is the reason that men do not know one another. The inevitable result is friction.

Expression of this soul does not devolve upon any clan or sect but upon everyone of us. He who can release the soul from the bondage of civilisation will help humanity. The greatest tragedy is that man has forgotten himself. That forgetfulness must be removed. When the whole world is getting impatient and crying—"I want", "I want", then in fulness of bliss and joy, we are to say within our hearts, "I do not want."

People are boasting to day this is the age of democracy, everyone is our king. True, it is

not a small thing. But what then ! Is it enough to have crores of kings in the place of one ? Is supremacy the last word ? Is not salvation a greater thing. Those lords of mills are painting the whole world by the tar of commercial rivalry, they are building up a selfish political code on the quicksands of falsehood and are striking one another—is it a credit because of the fact that the organised orgy of rivalry and temptation is the record, not of one man but of many.

The sky is overcast with gloomy thunders of many overlords but the pure and serene radiance of a free and liberated man is not found here on earth. In a stormy sky, lightening is frightening all but where is the Saptarshi ? Where is “Dhrubatara” ! The vultures are fighting for decomposed corpses but where is the man who will carry the message of “Amritam”.

This modern age ridden with the vanity of lord has lost sight of the truth that a free man’s contribution to the world is greater than what millions of kings do give. Will India fail to carry this message ! The vanity of man

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is working havoc and overpowering all. If India can save herself from the overpowering witchcraft, then she will find solution for all. India can attain the impossible, if she prize soul above everything else."

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"The strong form their league by a combination of powers, driving the weak to form their own league alone with the God."

*Rabindranath.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### RELATION OF MAN AND WOMAN.

“WHEN man was being made, the Creator was a school-master, his bag full of commandments and principles but when He came to woman, He turned artist with only His brush and paint-box.” Rabindranath believes that woman imparts rhythm to the reckless movement of man. Woman can overcome the whole world by love and “guide into permanence the current which would lose itself in the amorphousness of morass.” Passive qualities of chastity, modesty, devotion and self-sacrifice are found in greater measure in woman than in man. Woman can tame wild elements, turn monster forces into creations of beauty. She shines in love, modesty and charm. She is necessary for healing, nourishing and storing of life. The

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Poet, in giving out the central idea of his "Red Oleanders" said :—All the energy of the men of Yaksha Town is constantly engaged in the extraction of golden treasure from the depth of the earth and the cruel greed of such constant endeavour has banished Beauty from their midst...Meanwhile enters Nandini, the woman. The impact of Life comes upon the Machine. The all-daring importunity of love attacks the net work of bondage set up by struggling greed. Now, at the insidious onslaught of this force of woman's love, man came to break the door of this prison of his own building, in a supreme attempt to liberate the stream of life."

Such is the magic influence of woman.<sup>1</sup> Man has his bravery, woman her charm.

1. "With a glance of your eyes you could plunder all the wealth of songs struck from poet's harps, fair woman ! But for their praises you have no care, therefore I come to praise you.

You could humble at your feet the proudest heads in the world.

But it is your loved ones unknown to fame, whom you choose to worship, therefore I worship you.

The perfection of your arms would add glory to kingly splendour with their touch.

But you use them to sweep away the dust and to make clean your humble home, therefore. I am filled with awe."

Rabindranath.

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Love is for woman, power for man. Man goes on augmenting power, woman holds the balance. The love of woman not only makes us glad but we feel therein our truest welfare. Man is incomplete, he is busy making inroads into the unknown. But "woman is established in her own nature and she does not perilously have to venture forth to seek its fulfilment." In the creation of the body, woman takes the full responsibility, so the function of creation in the world of mind belongs to man. "In the fields of literature and art, science and philosophy, morals and religion, this life-long truant from the workshop of physical life has thus been busy creating what we call civilisation." Man builds civilisation without, but woman is at the bottom, providing impetus and encouragement, imparting life and harmony. The power of woman is immense.<sup>1</sup> She can create a man, she can destroy a man. In the Kurukshetra

1. All those portions of our social ceremonies which betoken auspiciousness are in woman's charge; when setting out on any adventure we value blessing of the mother more than that of father, for we feel that like perfume from the censer, the woman's prayer rises daily to heaven in the vermillion spot worn by the wife at the parting of her hair as

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battle, Draupadi was instrumental in giving power to Bhima from behind the screen. Cleopatra took away the might of mighty Antony. Sabitri rescued Satyaban from death. But there is no end of men who have fallen from truth through machinations of women. The fundamental difference<sup>1</sup> between man and woman is clearly put down in the Poet's "Diary of a traveller in the West."

a charm to fend her husband from all harm ; in the sandal paste with which the sister decks her brother's forehead once a year to mark her ever-green remembrance of the joys and sorrows of her childhood's home ; in the ulucry of rejoicing, her conch-blast of festivity ; in the meaning of each one of her every day ornaments ; in her thousand and one expressed and suppressed anxieties."—Rabindranath.

1. Romain Rolland—"An intelligent woman has, much more than a man, moments of an intuitive perception of things eternal ; but it is more difficult for her to maintain her grip on them. Once a man has come by the idea of the eternal, he feels it with his life-blood, a woman uses it to feel her own life, she absorbs it and does not create."

John Christopher.

"Man for the field and woman for the hearth ;  
Man for the sword and for needle she ;  
Man with the head and woman with heart ;  
All else is confusion."—Tennyson.

Man should be educated for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior"—Nietzche.

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The instinct of revolt is in man. Man likes to fight—not that fight is necessary but only for the sake of bravado. Man refuses to be swayed by temptation, his mind cries out—"I shall go out in search of the Infinite. I shall attain the Impossible." He refuses to be restricted by any bondage. That is the peculiar trait of the masculine section. When one man says—"I won't look at women, they are the spies of nature," others around him applaud his strength of mind. But woman never says—"I like to forsake man." There might be discontented suffragites or flappers, who would give out such expression but that does not show the normal state. By the law of nature, woman has an assigned place while man is to seek his own. In this quest of life, man comes across many things ; he can't stop but goes on and on.

Thus the arrangements differ. Woman has got her place, while man has not. So woman likes to establish her relationship with the environments, she likes to attain her completeness in them. She does not fret and foam but lives in peace with her surroundings and her own world. Woman relieves the monotony

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and the heaviness of her world by love. This love, which is the greatest thing in woman's life, removes the bondage of her static existence.

The greatest power of humanity is the power of creation. Woman first creates, then finds her happy home. But this creation is possible only through love. People who think that woman has no freedom, as she lives in home, have failed to know the truth. The women who have found out the truth overcome every bondage by love. This freedom is better than aloofness from the world. True it is that all women do not attain completeness, nor do all men. It is admitted on all hands that abuse of the power of love is the most dangerous of all things. The love which cannot give freedom by sacrifice but on the contrary devours the other self is inimical. That form of love, says the Poet, burns the one by encouraging hunger and withers the other by helping gross attachment. Best expression of man is in "Tapasya"; the power of sacrifice and the power of service in woman's love are in tune with that "Tapasya"; the mingling of the two factors enlightens both the parties. There

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might harp another discordant tune in woman's love—the shooting of the arrow of Lust. That is not the song of freedom but of bondage. That disturbs the "Tapasya". So says Rabindranath :—"Man by freeing himself from the chains of nature has followed knowledge, devotion, power in the Infinite. Therefore, man is in eternal opposition to nature. Woman's love attains its object only when it unifies this conflict, when it prepares gracefully the seat of worship in the temple of austere knowledge, when it does not stifle man's freedom but makes it noble, when it does not drown man in the sea of enjoyment—rather it helps man to bathe in "Suradhani",.....God has kept man only at arm's length from woman. This gulf will be filled up by service, forgiveness, prowess, beauty, happy thought—here is the auspicious meeting of the finite with the Infinite..... The work of creation becomes easy if the horizon of heart is not enveloped in coarse passion. He who likes to grip the lamp intensely by merely holding it by both hands is indeed mad, for he himself is burnt thereby and puts out the light in the bargain. Worshipful woman has got the sacred charge of

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lighting the lamp of love in the temple of freedom which has been built up in leisure by man's age-long "Tapasya" (meditation). If she forgets that, if she does not stop to sell the offerings of God in the market of flesh, then man gives way to lust and passion spoils the good qualities ingrained in women."

Love is a perfect feeling, it should on no account be abused as that will destroy freedom and soil the creation. It is at the sweet touch of love that the shackles of the world fall. Most people in our country think that to stand aloof from the bondage of the world is freedom. That is wrong. Women who have the privileged right of motherhood develop certain instincts that help them considerably in the establishment of relationship with the world. Thus they create homes—this creation is not a weebit inferior to the creation of epic, song or empire. Much good sense, skill, sacrifice, and self-control go to make the whole thing. Housewifery is the necessity of woman, not for enjoyment, nor for comfort but for freedom. And freedom is the full expression of one's self.

There is no shame in proclaiming that women are for homes, that represent the truth

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of human relationship. Love binds women to children who in their turn bind them to home. The functions of man and woman differ here.<sup>1</sup> "If Eve were a mere tautology of Adam", she would have been only monotonous superfluity. "Life finds its truth and beauty

1. "We are foolish and without excuse foolish in speaking of the superiority of one sex to the other, as if they could be compared in similar things. Each has what the other has not : each completes the other and is completed by the other ; they are in nothing alike, and the happiness and perfection of both depends on each asking and receiving for the other what the other only can give. The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention ; his energy for adventure, for war and for conquest wherever war is just, whenever conquest necessary. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle—and her intellect is not for invention or creation but for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims and their places. Her great function is praise ; she enters into contest but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation.....And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her, the stars only may be over her head ; the glow-worms in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot ; but home is yet wherever she is ; and for a noble woman, it stretches far round her, better than ceiled with cedar, or painted with vermillion, shedding its quiet light far, for those who else were homeless.....So for as she rules, all must be right or nothing is. She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good ; instinctively, infallibly wise—wise not for self-development, but for self-renunciation ; wise, not that she may

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not in exaggeration of sameness but in harmony."

True woman creates homes but the fountain spring of the creation of woman is love which seeks the association of man for her own development and fulfilment. The field of love's creation is not in solitude. The man who represses himself pains the woman and makes her imperfect. It is seen that those males who can exact get much from women. Women are real "Abhisarikas." Woman wants man absolutely. She is very eager to surround him with all her wiles. She cannot afford to wait. So the man given over to devotion and meditation keeps himself aloof from woman. For the completeness of love, woman wants a particular man. She wants him with all his imperfections. Love does not wait for perfection in man, it attains its completeness in the imperfect man. She does not elevate man by her imagination, she is herself overpowered by

set herself above her husband. but that she may never fail from his side; wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service—the true changefulness of woman.—Ruskin.

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love and she overpowers man by reciprocated love with full consciousness of his defects. But man is imaginative. He is the dreamer of dreams. That meditative instinct of man finds expressions in his work. Woman is not adventurous, she does not stake anything for nothing. The spirit of gambling is not in her. She is economical, she is careful but never rash. Man on the contrary does not fear to gain through a tremendous loss. Man is never calculating, he dares to win or lose. Man rushes on and is carried away by imagination that creates and destroys things for the sake of sport. Man does not fear extermination for the sake of creation. Woman has patience and self-control but man is always impatient. Utilitarian sense prevails in woman but man soars above the gross necessities of the world. He introduces himself into the world which is not bound down by chain of necessities. This is the reason, man's credit balance is in the world of imagination and contemplation and knowledge. Man is essentially mystic but woman is worldly.

Man's thirst for wholeness and infinite develops his love. When man loves a woman,

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he wants her, whole and complete, purged of all imperfections. Man by his imagination has spread a net of delusion all over women. Woman is thus a snare to man, a delusion, a creature got up by his imagination. So he sings :—“You are one half woman and one half dream.”<sup>1</sup>

Rabindranath does not think that woman is a commodity, the value of which will be assessed in the open market. He does not believe that woman has come to delude man into hell. Woman is to him not a lump of flesh but she carries a deep inner meaning. She is the product of rhythm and image of wholeness. She does not work but serves.

1. “O woman, you are not merely the handiwork of God, but also of men ; these are ever endowing you with beauty from their hearts.

Poets are weaving for you a web with threads of golden imagery ; painters are giving your form ever new immortality.

The sea gives its pearls, the mines their gold, the summer gardens their flowers to deck you, to cover you, to make you more precious,

The desire of man’s hearts does not shed its glory over your Youth.

You are one half woman and one half dream.”

Rabindranath.

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She imparts enchantment to things she touches. She stirs up man, she is a delight, she purges off all the crudeness of the world. Man's imagination finds the greatest delight in woman—there is no shame in it. Woman is the picture not of a photographer but of an artist. Therefore it requires imagination to understand her. Everything is not in the picture, and much is to be incorporated before a full view is possible. So the imagination of man is necessary to give the finishing touch to the picture. Imaginative as man is, he loves to ponder over that picture to complete the wholeness. That is the whole thing.

### **A New Current.**

The relationship of man and woman is now undergoing a change. "The very psychology of men and women about their mutual relation is changing and becoming the psychology of primitive fighting elements, rather than of humanity seeking its completeness through the union based upon mutual self-surrender.....Like gaseous particles

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forced into a too narrow space, they come in continual conflict with the other till they burst the very arrangement which holds them in bondage." Equalisation in the West is going on wrong lines. Comforts of home no longer appeal to people and hotels are being built on the ruins of home. Men want luxury—not comforts. They are more for dogs, horses, pipes, guns and gambling clubs rather than for home. Thus the relationship has been tainted. In building up of social life, women function as artists—not artisans. Any necessity that drives women to fashion is a desecration. "Woman has to be ready to suffer—her emotions not to be dulled or polluted, for they are to create her life's atmosphere." But things have come to such a pass that women are sacrificed to blood-thirsty idols of organisation. Women do not now like to grow lovely, graceful, and beautiful. They feel ashamed of their own womanliness. They have forgotten that "they are the mothers of the race and they have a real interest in the things that are around them, that are the common things of life ; if they did not have that, the race would

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perish.”<sup>1</sup> This restlessness in woman is not the normal aspect of her nature.

Rabindranath says that woman’s protest merely shows that she is suffering, it does not prove that men and women are equal. Rabindranath strongly resents the idea that women should be oppressed, repressed and suppressed. Masculine creations without woman’s influence are “towers of Babel, they dare defy their foundations and therefore topple down over and over again.” Rabindranath believes that “God with his message of love, has sent women as guardians of individuals”<sup>2</sup> and it is a lamentable fact that women are shut against all activities. Intrusion of woman into man’s region is as much despicable as ignoring of woman in the life of nation. Therefore, he says—“At the present stage of history, civilisation is almost

1. “Man’s work for his own home is to secure its maintenance, progress, and defence ; the woman’s to secure its order, comfort and loveliness.”—Ruskin.

2. Romain Rolland :—“How utterly lonely a woman is ! Except children, nothing can hold her ; and children are not enough to hold her for ever ; for when she is really a woman and not merely a female, when she has a rich soul and an abounding vitality, she is made for so many things.”—John Christopher.

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exclusively masculine, a civilisation of power, in which woman has been thrust aside in the shade. Therefore, it has lost balance and it is moving by hopping from war to war. Its motive forces are the forces of destruction.....Time has arrived when women must step in and impart her life-rhythm to this reckless movement of power."

It is high time that we should see that woman receives her own share but she must not be allowed to deflect from her own world, otherwise tragedy is inevitable in both the cases.

### **Marriage.**

Rabindranath says that marriage is the establishment of truce between the desire of Nature and Man. The form of marriage differs in as much as we agree to repress nature. Unbridled indulgence in the desire of flesh may be psychological ; but that is not glorious or desirable. Marriage is a compromise whereby man agrees to restrain himself. The form depends upon the amount of restraint. Where life's journey is not safe, man is not slave to society. But in India we want home and we want to sacrifice

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ourselves to society. As a result, the institution of marriage has aimed at satisfying the demands of the society—not of nature. Our marriage has taken a turn which may not disturb social laws. Sakuntala had to pay much for her negligence as she outstripped social regulations in offering her love to Dushyanta. So Kalidas has shown that Sakuntala—restless, passionate, and forgetful of duties—could not get Dushyanta. The union of Sakuntala and Dushyanta was effected when Sakuntala was sober, controlled, dutiful and elevated. In Raghubansam, Kumar-sambhabam and Abhijnan Sakuntalam, we find that “Bibaha” (marriage) is “tapasya” for the birth of the child and towards that end, control of desire is the indispensable means. That is the fundamental philosophy of marriage. The union of a couple is only realised in the manifestation of a third being but the union must be broad-based on self-surrender and self-control. Rabindranath believes in the solemnity of marriage.<sup>1</sup> He knows full well that marriage

1. Rabindranath in “Naukadobi” shows the magical power of Hindu marriage or peculiar mentality of a Hindu woman. Kamala after years of separation goes over to Nalinaksha when

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is not a sport and wife is not a costly furniture. Marriage is a training—man learns to control himself and woman to express herself. It is not a mere contract but a union of hearts.

There is a belief in many educated men's minds that now-a-days marriage is a blunder because man does not get a qualified wife. How can an educated man take a less qualified girl as his wife? Man wants his wife as a mate and wife must be able to appreciate and help husband's work.<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath does not believe that man will be only loving his wife, if

she knows him to be her husband, though all these years, Ramosh loved and served Kamala ardently.

1. All such knowledge should be given her as may enable her to understand, and even to aid the work of men ; and yet it should be given, not as Knowledge—not as if it were, or could be, for her an object to know ; but only to feel and to judge. It is of no moment, as a matter of pride or perfectness in herself, whether she knows many languages or one ; but it is of the utmost, that she should be able to show kindness to a stranger and to understand the sweetness of a stranger's tongue. It is of no moment to her own worth or dignity that she should be acquainted with this science or that ; but it is of the highest that she should be trained in habits of accurate thought, that she should understand the meaning, the inevitableness and the loveliness of natural laws, and follow at least some one path of scientific attainment, as far as to the threshold of that bitter Valley of Humiliation into which only the wisest and bravest

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she is equally qualified. Love grows in spite of the qualities we want in her. "If you are an artist, you can love a wife who is not an artist. Not necessarily, the two should be equally qualified. If you get, all right, but if you do not, you need not worry." Man expects love and self-sacrifice from woman—not the same education as he has. So Rabindranath's Nikhilesh said—"In trying to manufacture a help-mate, we spoil a wife. I should not try

of men can descend, owning themselves for ever children, gathering pebbles on a boundless shore. It is not the object of education to turn woman into a dictionary but it is deeply necessary that she should be taught to enter with her whole personality into the history she reads; to picture the passages of it vitally in her own bright imagination; to apprehend, with her fine instincts, the pathetic circumstances and dramatic relations, which the historian too often only eclipses by his reasoning and disconnects by his arrangement, it is for her to trace the hidden equities of divine reward, and catch sight, through the darkness of the fateful threads of woven fire that connect error with retribution. She is to be taught somewhat to understand the nothingness of the proportion which the little world in which she lives and loves, bears to the world in which God lives and loves, and solemnly she is to be taught to strive that her thoughts of piety may not be feeble in proportion to the number they embrace, nor her prayer more languid than it is for the momentary relief from pain of her husband or her child, when it is uttered for the multitudes of those who have none to love them—and is for all who are desolate and oppressed."—Ruskin.

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to fetter my life's companion with my ideas  
but play the joyous pipes of my love."

Rabindranath says it clearly that husbands should not have physical possession over wives. That gives one the idea of commercial transaction. It is the natural instinct of husband to exercise his power of possession over his wife but that kills the true love. Love will be given a chance to grow without any extraneous pressure. So Rabindranath says that "Parakia" philosophy is the best philosophy of love, because therein we have no supremacy over wife except that of love. And he says that in our married state, we should cultivate that "Parakia" love, where there is no vanity of possession but only glory of love. Wife should grow in her own way and if love can cement the union, that is the best form.

Possession kindles the instinct of brute and true love can never prosper. This question is very intensively discussed in Rabindranath's "Home and World." There Nikhilesh asks himself :—"In the midst of the immense, agelong concourse of humanity, what is Bimala to you ? What is a wife ? A bubble of a name blown big with your own breath, so

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carefully guarded night and day.....if Bimala is not mine, she is not ; and no fuming or fretting or arguing will serve to prove that she is...The very ocean of tears has its other shore, else none would have ever wept.” This is a very serious question presented by the author and every husband is to answer this question. Nikhilesh did not believe in display of strength in extracting devotion from wife. He knows that only the weak dare not be just. He also knows that strength which is a mere display of masculinity must have no scruples in treading the weak under foot. So Nikhilesh asks himself again and again— “Bimala was my home-made Bimala—the product of confined space and the daily routine of small duties. Did love which I received from her come from heart or was it merely like the daily provision of pipe-water pumped up by the municipal steam engine of society.” And Rabindranath gives the answer through the mouth of Nikhilesh. Nikhilesh says to his wife Bimala— “What I want is that I should have you and you should have me more fully in the outside world. That is where we are still in debt to each other. I would have you come into the

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heart of the outer world and meet reality. Merely going on with your household duties, living all your life in the world of household conventions and the drudgery of household tasks—you were not made for that. If we meet and recognise each other in the real world, then only will our love be true. Perfect gain is the best of all but if that is impossible, the next best gain is perfect losing."

Nikhilesh does not believe in the use of force,<sup>1</sup> so he says :— "The passage from the narrow to the larger world is stormy. When she is familiar with freedom, I shall know where my place is. Use force ? Can force prevail against truth ?" And truly has Rabindranath said :— "They are cowards who

1. "You may chisel a boy into a shape, as you would a rock, or hammer him into it, if he be of a better kind, as you would a piece of bronze. But you cannot hammer a girl into anything. She grows as a flower does—she will wither without sun, she will decay in her sheath, as a narcissus will, if you do not give her air enough ; she may fall and defile her head in dust, if you leave her without help at some moments of her life ; but you cannot fetter her ; she must take her own fair form and way. if she takes any, and in mind as in body, must have always

Her household motions light and free,  
And steps of virgin liberty." —Ruskin.

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claim absolute devotion from their wives as their right ; that is humiliation for both." Use of force verily stands in the way of true love, because "love is a vagabond who can make his flower bloom in the wayside dust better than in the crystal jars kept in the drawing room." On the other hand, woman also does not find pleasure in feeling she has power over man. "To surrender one's pride in devotion is woman's only salvation." Perfect union is only possible when man will give up all claims before his wife is revealed in truth and wife will then be able to join chorus with Bimala :— "I now fear nothing. I have passed through fire. What was inflammable has been burnt to ashes. What is left is deathless. Come, come, now is the time to set sail towards the great confluence where the river of love meets the sea of worship. In that pure blue, all the weight of its muddiness sinks and disappears."

## The Society.

Rabindranath knows full well that the society stands in the way of perfect union. Social regulations and customs often impede

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the growth of love in man and woman. And Rabindranath as a fighting thinker knows that humanity will be poorer if man is to groan eternally under the weight of social regulations. Man is to free himself from the bondage of society and grow in full splendour of freedom. Shackles must be removed but he warns the people that a great responsibility lies on the iconoclasts. The man who will break the society for a true ideal must be very cautious, so that he might not degenerate and thereby destroy the sanctity of the ideal. So Rabindranath says in "Gora": "It is not true that man will deprave himself for the sake of society—society shall have to expand for men. I cannot blame those who are ready to bear sufferings..... But this much I would like to say, if you wish to disobey the society, you are to be greater than the society. Those who dare solve new problems by their own lives elevate the society. Those who obey the rules and regulations of the society only keep the society going on. They do not help its progress. Man will err, man will be baffled but man will not sit idle. Surrender to what you think proper. In this wise, the stream of

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this world will be kept flowing and pure. This might occasionally erode the bank but if we obstruct the stream eternally on this apprehension, that will be inviting stagnation and decay." If society be oppressive, there is no justification to obey it, rather such obedience is a menace to healthy progress. Rabindranath's Benoy in "Gora" says—"Today, I stand alone. Monster of society shall have to be appeased by the sacrifice of humanity and we are to live, move and have our being with the shackles of society around our neck—all these I cannot submit to. If society fail to recognise the man in me, if society try to make me an automaton doll, I can't worship it with flowers and sandal—I would call it an iron machine."

Husband and wife must meet as man and woman. The passport to union is not caste or creed. That they are men and women should be a sufficient guarantee. If society comes in the way and suggests mutilation of individuals on the strength of castes or creeds, it will be morally responsible for the doom. Union on the extinction of one's religion, conviction and society is not desirable. Lalita (a Brahmo

girl) addressing Benoy (a Hindu boy) said :— “I cannot brook the humility that you would come to receive me humbling yourself. Stay fearlessly where you are, that is what I want.” Love overcomes all differences.

But here the cautious people might shriek and say in protest that disrespect to society will bring in moral laxity. Where life flows in full and develops in full, society receives many shocks. Where life is overflowing, variety is abundant. True it is that progress of society involves risks. We must not shirk from facing those risks boldly ; the bogey of risks should not be responsible for hugging narrowness and lifelessness within ourselves. Narrowness must be known as narrowness. Lifelessness is death. Shame be on us if we try to pass off narrowness as a sign of healthy society. That is the curse of the nation.

On no account there can be compromise with injustice. On the plea of preserving the purity of the society, women are left in the cold shade of negligence and indifference. The society has conspired to treat women as slaves. Rabindranath strongly resents this inhuman oppression. “Women’s minds are petty and

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crooked. Has not the pressure of society cramped them into pettiness and crookedness. They are but pawns of the fate which gambles with them. What responsibility have they of their own." Such is the tragedy of women's life in India. Society has arranged things in a way that there is no other way to woman but to suffer. Society has forged thousand and one customs to subjugate woman hopelessly to man. By anointing the vanity of chastity, an attempt is made to heal women's wound. But that does not improve the situation. No attempt is made to make all the wounds impossible, because women are so cheap and so insignificant. Rabindranath says that time has come when women would say "No" to all these sufferings. Bipradas in Rabindranath's "Yogayog" says:—"My struggle is with that society which has avoided giving woman her due." Indian society is a bundle of regulations, designed to suppress women. It makes no room for love. Bipradas in advising his sister Kumu says:—"Where power is an accident, where it has not been tested or where there is no need of showing greater worth to retain power—under such conditions

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power only breeds meanness. Blind respect only degrades humanity. Time has come when slavery couched in big phrases is to be shattered." The tragedy of the situation in India is that women are the best enemies of women. They themselves do not want respect. They are satisfied with slavery and justify it. Kumu is perfectly and cruelly right when she says to her brother :—"To understand mistake and to shake off mistake are two different things. You know many things, so you are free. We obey many things, so we are in bondage. You talk of freedom, but its impediment is in our blood. We obey the Guru, we obey the coward. The net is within us. Who can protect us from this ?"

That is the correct analysis of the tragic situation. So Rabindranath makes Kumu protest against the falsehood of the society and say (refusing to be enchainedin her husband's house) :—"What am I ; if I am not Kumu first." <sup>1</sup>

1. Just like Nora of Ibsen's Doll's House.

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Women should not be crushed on any account.<sup>1</sup> They must be allowed to grow in their own way. It does not mean that they will be led astray from their proper function. Maladjustment is more deadly than death itself. Rabindranath has always fought for human treatment to woman. Women should neither be left at man's feet nor treasured up in his head, they should be in man's heart. Man should love woman. Woman does not like adoration nor treatment like galley slaves. They blossom by the touch of love. They wither by lack of care or are spoilt by undue reverence.

For a peaceful world, a perfect meeting based on mutual faith and understanding is

1. "Of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible, none is so degrading, so shocking, so brutal as his abuse of the better half of humanity—to me the more tender but not the weaker sex. It is the nobler of the two, for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility and faith .....I passionately desire the utmost freedom for our women. I detest child-marriages. I shudder to see a child widow; and shiver with rage when a husband, just widowed, with brutal indifference, contracts another marriage. I deplore the criminal negligence of parents who keep their daughters utterly ignorant and illiterate and bring them up only for the purpose of marrying them off to young men of means. Women must have votes and an equal legal status."—Mr. Gandhi.

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necessary. Modern age is riding on a tornado of rapidity—it is sure to crash, unless there is rhythm and cadence in that senseless speed. The need to woman is to give rhythm and cadence to man's movement.

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“Woman knows man well enough where he is weak but she is quite unable to fathom him where he is strong.”

*Rabindranath's “Home and World.”*

## CHAPTER IX.

### SWARAJ AND CHARKA.

(*A brief resume of Rabindranath Tagore's articles, "Charka" and "Swaraj," in Sabujpatra in 1332 B. S.*)

IT is not possible that we can agree on all occasions. But our society-gods desire such unanimity. To make our work easy they are ready to dwarf the man. God wants uniformity in diversity but our society-lords want the smothering of all differences. So we find all the workers like automaton dolls. If any one try to revolt, the lords come down upon him like vultures and tear him down to pieces. So our society is lying like Leviathan, an amorphous mass, with vitality extinct, joy dulled and vision blinded.

Our distribution of work follows the line of heredity. Thus man grows into slave in course

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of time. India is a stale repetition of the old. The people at large are deceived by those who are cleverer. They do not know that things can shape otherwise. They believe that they are destined to drag on such miserable existence. When we expect any big work from them, we find that they are meant only to obey. It is impossible to work with and among these people, unless we can make their minds alive.

Whenever any great man comes in our country, he comes with a message which appeals to one's soul. They are not worldly and calculating in their utterances. They do not say—first solve the poverty problem and then cultivate the powers of soul. Their demands are laid before the soul of people. They give light and freedom for the people.

If there is poverty throughout the land, the root is within ourselves. If we pick up only one of the many causes of our great misery and concentrate our attention on it, things will not improve a whit. Men are not so many stones that their forms could be changed by hammer. When tangible signs of poverty appear outside, we are to look within.

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Some of us are advocating that Charka is the only weapon in our struggle for freedom. There is only one work to do, there is only one order to obey. Is Charka really such a great thing that three million of Indians in scorn of their fundamental differences, will apply their precious time and best energy to the spinning wheel? Fiat has gone out in the country ordering all to worship Charka but the fiat has fallen flat. All people cannot be smothered into one. That shows disrespect for humanity, for our countrymen. Swaraj can only be attained when true unity of heart is possible.

We had been so long under the impression that the attainment of swaraj is a difficult task. But suddenly the glad tiding that swaraj can be easily and immediately attained reached our ears and we were not in a mood to question it. There are people who get excited over the fact that "Sannyasi" can transform a copper pice into a Gold mohur. This is not an evidence of their foolishness but that they have been a victim to temptation which stands in the way of the exercise of their intelligence.

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Of late, our countrymen have been perplexed by the news that Swaraj is within reach. But when the statutory period of the attainment of Swaraj expired, it was argued that our failure was due to not carrying out the conditions, precedent to Swaraj. But that is the rub and that is always the case. It is needless to mention that if the Hindus can meet the Moslems in a benign spirit of friendliness, the movement of Swaraj is greatly helped. But the trouble is that the spirit of friendliness is absent.

Then the question comes in, what is Swaraj? Our leaders have not defined it clearly. The meaning of "Swadhinata" (Independence) is wide. We have the freedom to spin our own Charka but we have not taken to Charka, first, because Charka cannot compete with machine. Secondly, if the whole country take to Charka, poverty might be mitigated to some extent. But that is not Swaraj. It has been suggested that alleviation of poverty is a big problem with us and if the peasants *en block* take to spinning in their leisure period, they can earn decently and improve their lot considerably. But the problem of employing the leisure

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period of the peasants can not be solved so easily. Prescription of Charka for the malady of poverty is not the right remedy.

The cultivators are influenced by their habits and work, incidental to cultivation which alone appeals to them. When he cultivates, he is said to be working, when he does not, he is said to be idle. He does not refuse work because of idleness. If it had been possible to cultivate all the year round, he would have done that. Whenever one departs from his own line of action, he is said to have been endowed with sufficient liveliness of mind. The work of a labourer moves on a fixed line—it cannot swerve an inch in spite of grave provocation. If a cultivator is asked to work beyond his fixed line, his mind will be surely “derailed.” Of course, you can somehow move him but the waste of strength will be considerable.

I am in close touch with the cultivators of at least two districts of Bengal. I know that habits sit tight on them. One district is noted for one kind of crop. The cultivators who can work hard for the sowing and storing of paddies do not have the same enthusiasm in

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respect of other crops. They are so bound down by customs and habits.

When we are to solve a problem, we are first to find out the way whereby the mind of man could be cut adrift from old mooring to the new channel. The solution does not lie in the finding out of an easy external system. The primary work is the preparation of mind. It is very easy to give out the fiat—"Let the Hindus meet the Moslems", it is even easy to make some material sacrifice towards that end. But the traditions of centuries-old which sit tight on the minds of Hindus and Moslems and separate the one from the other cannot be changed by such a fiat. Herein is the need of "Sadhana" and training. The temptation for Swaraj is not enough to do away with the externals that are sucking the vitality of mind. Impediment to our progress is in the mind. If anyone calls us to reform the mind itself, we become nervous. So when a leader comes and recommends an easy programme which does not touch our mind, laden with the abuses of centuries, we welcome him as a prophet. We do not know that remedy is elsewhere—not in hatching out a programme

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which touches our externals. He who has no power to earn honestly takes to gambling to amass riches, never minding the doom that awaits him.

If Charka can give one Swaraj, then it must be admitted that Swaraj is an external thing. People find solace in the knowledge that their activities are being directed towards spinning only. Our countrymen are thus relieved of reforming their minds which are the breeding-ground of disease. Any programme which does not ask them to look within is appreciated by our countrymen.<sup>1</sup>

It is silly to ask the cultivators to take to charka. Our duty is not to thrust a new kind of work on them but to help them in their own work. The cultivators should be told not to waste their energies in other directions ; they should improve their cultivation by scientific methods. We should try to exact their best

1. The negative aspect of Gandhi's programme appealed to them as they are asked not to move. Stagnancy they like and any leader who calls them to sit tight and not to move is a prophet. Their Traditions, Customs, habits, angularities with all these things our countrymen like to "live." Hence the barrenness of Gandhi's programme

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energies in the cultivation. The cultivators should be taught to call science in their aid. Thus, they can improve their position. The efforts of peasants are not to be wasted over Charka and other things. It might give them immediate gain but lose they must in the long run. New occupation cannot appeal to them, because the psychological truth cannot be disregarded that bigotry lies in the mind which has no culture.

The point at issue is that Charka must not be confused with Swaraj. Our countrymen are beclouded by the mist of mis-understanding as to the meaning of Swaraj and Charka. They must know that they are not one thing—Charka can give you immediate physical comforts but Swaraj is a higher thing—at least more than the removal of poverty. The welfare of the country does not lie merely in Charka. We must have full idea of what the all-round welfare of the country means. Khaddar in great quantity in the country is not enough ; that is the calculation of worldly man. This cannot arouse the latent forces of the country which brook no worldly calculation. Charka cannot enkindle that force which does not care adver-

sity or death, despondence or dejection. Khaddar can satisfy a worldly man but not those daring bands of youths who are ready to stake everything for their country. Those young hopefules do not picture Mother country as having abundance of khaddar but as One, graceful, superb, resplendant, joyous, free from bondage within and outside. The full view of all-round Swaraj should always dangle before our countrymen. From the very beginning, it is wholeness that should appeal to us. Imperfections cannot give us joy.

• The welfare of the country does not consist in one or two items, it is the sum total of many things. They are indissolubly bound up with one another. Therefore, the picture of wholeness is necessary. Our life flows in different channels and all the channels should be taken care of, if we like to see the flow of life, smooth, graceful and happy.

Country is not made our own by the simple fact that we are born here. Man creates his country by his own effort, and thus he establishes relations with others. But our countrymen are born not to create, not to attain the unattained in his happy home-land.

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When the spirit of co-ordinated effort will pervade among our countrymen, then the fabric of Swaraj will be consolidated and therefore true. When the spirit of co-ordination is absent in villages, when that absence is causing pain in our society, when our sanitation, agriculture, education, bliss are being starved by want of co-operation, it is then evident that any organisation which does not seek to remove the poverty of our mind is not potent enough to bring in Swaraj in the country. Our Swaraj is that which helps us to create. It might be argued that spinning is a kind of creation. But it is not so. The man at the spinning wheel is merely an automaton. He spins ; he establishes no relationship with others. He is a machine, he is alone, he is detached. But when a man goes out in villages in the welfare work, he may be working alone but his work is the expression of a desire to meet all the villagers. That is a creative desire. Thus the one lamp lights the other and people learn to express themselves. That is Swaraj.

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